10.2

PSEUDO-SECULARISM CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AND HINDU RESISTANCE

4774

SITA RAM GOEL

PSEUDO-SECULARISM, CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AND HINDU RESISTANCE

वर्णी दि. जैन (शोध) संस्थान
4774
वाराणसी

Pseudo-Secularism, Christian Missions and Hindu Resistance

SITA RAM GOEL

श्री गणेश वर्णी दि. जैन (शोध) संस्थान
4774
(का. हि. वि. वि.) वाराणसी-5

VOICE OF INDIA
New Delhi

First Published: 1998

ISBN 81-85990-54-9

Published by Voice of India, 2/18, Ansari Road, New Delhi – 110 002
and printed at Rajkamal Electric Press, Delhi – 110 033.

Contents

Preface vii

1. The Sunshine of 'Secularism' 1

2. Rift in the Lute 29

Preface

It was the summer of 1982. VOICE OF INDIA had hardly started its programme of publications. One fine morning an aged and visibly ailing sannyasi dropped in at my office in New Delhi. He had travelled all the way from some place (I forget the name) in Andhra Pradesh. Someone had given him a copy of my booklet, *Hindu Society Under Siege*, and having read the chapter, 'Residue of Christianism', he had concluded that I was the guy he had been looking for. He introduced himself as Baba Madhavdas and placed on my table printed copies of a summary of the Niyogi Committee Report in English and Hindi, published by him. Before I could ask him to take a seat, he shot a question at me, "You must have read the full Report? What do you think of it?"

I felt small and confessed that although I had seen the full Report soon after it was published, I had not read it even cursorily. His face fell. I had disappointed him. He brightened only when I told him the story of how I had missed reading the full Report till that time, and promised to read it as soon as I could lay my hands on it from a Government shop or some library. He told me that it was no more available in the Government shops because Christian missionaries had bought all available copies and destroyed them. Even in libraries, it was rarely available because the same missionaries had seen to it that copies were removed, or borrowed and not returned.

When the Report was published by the Government of Madhya Pradesh in 1956, I happened to be in the district town of Shahdol in Vindhya Pradesh (then a separate State, now merged in Madhya Pradesh) for filing my nomination papers from that Lok Sabha constituency in the Second General Elections (1956-57) as a Jana Sangh candidate. Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, President of the Jana Sangh at that time, was also in Shahdol that day. He was on a lecture tour of Vindhya Pradesh. We were staying in the same room as guests of a local gentleman. As we sat and chatted about the shape of things in the country at that time, half-a-dozen Party activists rushed into the room in a state of excitement and placed three volumes on the bed on which Pandit Dogra was sitting. One of them shouted in a tone of triumph, "Here it is at last. Christian missionaries have been disrobed (*naṅgā kar diyā hai*). Now it is for the Party, Panditji, to take it up and make it known to the country at large."

Pandit Dogra thumbed through the volumes and promised to place it before the Working Committee of his Party at the very next meeting. Then he handed over the volumes to me and asked me to go through them so that I could tell him in the evening the gist of what they contained. I looked at the title. It was *Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee Madhya Pradesh*, 1956 in 2 Volumes and three Parts, Volume II being divided into Parts A and B. It became famous as the Niyogi Committee Report because its Chairman was Dr. M. Bhawani Shankar Niyogi, a retired Chief Justice of the Nagpur High Court.

I glanced through the Report and was impressed by the evidence marshalled, literary as well as oral. What struck me as very significant was that the Christian missionary activities in India had been viewed as part of the world-wide missionary operations. But that was all. I could not find time to read even Volume I of the Report because I was busy otherwise throughout the day. In the evening Pandit Dogra took away the Report with him as he was going to another place to address a meeting. I was certainly curious to know more about Christian missionaries than I knew at that time. It was only a few months earlier that a Jesuit priest from Patna had tried and failed to convert me. The talk I had had with him during a retreat in a Catholic monastery outside Hazaribagh in Bihar, had left a bad taste in the mouth. The convert I met in the library of St. Xavier's School at Patna later on had turned me against Christian missions.[1]

Years passed and I forgot all about the Niyogi Committee Report. The struggle to survive after having invited the ire of the Nehruvian establishment by opposing Communism, was too grim. Moreover, I wanted to know much more than I knew about my own Sanātana Dharma and its culture, before I could evaluate Christianity and its missions. I was ready for that task to a certain extent when I wrote that essay in *Hindu Society Under Siege* in the last quarter of 1981. But I had yet to learn a lot.

Baba Madhavdas did not tell me why and when he had taken sannyas, and how he had got involved in Hindu resistance to Christian missions. All I could learn from him was that he had moved all over the tribal areas in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Assam, starting since a few years before India attained independence in 1947. He had watched the Christian missionaries and their activities from close quarters, and the knowledge he had acquired about their means and methods was considerable. And he was very happy that the Niyogi Committee Report had confirmed in so many words all that he had learnt first hand about the missionary apparatus and its operations. At the same time, he had felt deeply pained that whatever resistance to Christian missionaries he had noticed before independence, had evaporated fast as soon as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru emerged as a colossus after the death of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

---

[1] I have told the story of what I heard and saw in *How I Became A Hindu* (1982), Third Enlarged Edition , Voice of India, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 46-49.

He had begged for small amounts of money, bought copies of the Niyogi Committee Report, and presented them to leaders of the Jana Sangh, the Arya Samaj, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Vishva Hindu Parishad when it was formed in 1964, and various rich men known for their sympathy towards Hindu causes. All that he wanted them to do was to read the Report and mobilize public opinion for persuading the Indian State to stop the flow of massive foreign funds which Christian missions were using for conversions by means of force, fraud and inducements. But his appeals had fallen on deaf ears. Different people had advanced different reasons for their unwillingness or incapacity to do anything in the matter. As a last resort he had got several thousand copies of a summary of the Report printed in English and Hindi and distributed them widely as he moved along.

He was happy once more when after the passing away of Pandit Nehru and before the rise of Indira Gandhi to supreme power, the Congress Governments of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh had passed Freedom of Religion Acts in 1967 and 1968 enabling the authorities to prevent conversions by means of force, fraud and inducements. Now citizens who came to know such malafide cases of conversion in these two States could report to the police or move the courts. But he discovered very soon that the Acts remained dead letters because people who could notice and report such cases were simply not there in the missionary fields.

The Jana Sangh and the Vishva Hindu Parishad had disappointed him in particular. When he asked the leaders and workers of these organizations to read the Report, they said that they had no time for books because they were active in the field. But when he requested them to survey the field and report the cases of malafide conversions to the concerned authorities, they had replied that the police was corrupt and the courts too slow to do anything. At the same time, they had boasted that they were developing and employing some "positive" methods to match the missionary network and beat them at their own game. He had yet to see these "positive" methods bearing fruit. Conversions were going on as ever before.

Baba Madhavdas felt totally disheartened when I told him the truth about VOICE OF INDIA, namely, that it had no office of its own, no staff except myself, and very limited funds collected through donations mainly from a few small businessmen with big hearts. He was, he said, a tired old man, sick in body and disillusioned in mind, and wanted to retire to Vrindavana so that he could die in peace. He wanted me to do him a favour — take the few hundred copies of the summary he had left with him. I bought them immediately and included the title in the catalogue we published next. At the same time, I promised to the Baba that I would read the full Niyogi Committee Report and reprint it as soon as I got sufficient funds.

I read the Report soon after and was overwhelmed by the wealth of material it presented, theoretical as well as empirical. But funds for reprinting the Report were not available till now. Meanwhile, I had summarised the Report in my own way in my *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters* published in 1989.[2] That summary is being included in this Introduction to the reprint.

New Delhi — **Sita Ram Goel**
25 December, 1997

---

[2] A Second Enlarged Edition has been published by Voice of India, New Delhi, in 1996.

4779

One

The Sunshine of 'Secularism'

Hindus from early seventeenth century Pandits of Tamil Nadu to Arun Shourie in the closing years of the twentieth, have spent no end of ink and breath to demolish the dogma of Christianity and denounce missionary methods. But it has hardly made any difference to the arrogance of Christian theologians and aggressiveness of Christian missionaries. That is because the dogma was never meant for discussion. It is an axiom of logic that that which has not been proved cannot and need not be disproved. Who has ever proved that the nondescript Jew who is supposed to have been crucified by a Roman governor of Judaea in 33 AD atoned for the sins of all humans for all time to come? Who has ever proved that those who accept that man as the only saviour will ascend to a heaven of everlasting bliss, and those who do not will burn for ever in the blazing fire of hell? Nor can the proclamation or the promise or the threat be disproved. High-sounding theological blah blah notwithstanding, the fact remains that the dogma is no more than a subterfuge for forging and wielding an organizational weapon for mounting unprovoked aggression against other people. It is high time for Hindus to dismiss the dogma of Christianity with the contempt it deserves, and pay attention to the Christian missionary apparatus planted in their midst.

The sole aim of this apparatus is to ruin Hindu society and culture, and take over the Hindu homeland. It goes on devising strategies for every situation, favourable and unfavourable. It trains and employs a large number of intellectual criminals ready to prostitute their talents in the service of their paymasters, and adept at dressing up dark designs in high-sounding language. The fact that every design is advertised as a theology in the Indian context and every criminal euphemized as an Indian theologian, should not hoodwink Hindus about the real intentions of this gangster game.

Hindus are committing a grave mistake in regarding the encounter between Hinduism and Christianity as a dialogue between two religions. Christianity has never been a religion; its long history tells us that it has always been a predatory imperialism par excellence. The encounter, therefore, should be viewed as a battle between two totally opposed and mutually exclusive ways of thought and behaviour. In the language of the Gita (Chapter 16), it is war between *daivī* (divine) and *āsurī* (demonic) *sampads* (propensities). In the mundane context of history, it can also be described as war between the Vedic and the Biblical traditions.

This is not the place to go into the premises from which the two traditions proceed. I have presented them in some detail elsewhere.[1] Here I will indicate briefly the behaviour patterns they promote.

The Vedic tradition advises people to be busy with themselves, that is, their own moral and spiritual improvement. Several disciplines have been evolved for this purpose: *tapas* (austerity), *yoga* (meditation), *jñāna* (reflection), *bhakti* (devotion), etc. A seeker can take to (*adhikāra*) whichever discipline suits his *adhāra* (stage of moral-spiritual preparation). There is no uniform prescription for everybody, no coercion or allurement into a belief system, and no regimentation for aggression against others.

The Biblical tradition, on the other hand, teaches people to be busy with others. One is supposed to have become a superior human being as soon as one confesses the 'only true faith'. Thenceforward one stands qualified to 'save' others. The only training one needs thereafter is how to man a mission or military expedition, how to convert others by all available means including force and fraud, and how to kill or ruin or blacken those who refuse to come round.

---

[1] Sita Ram Goel, *Defence of Hindu Society*, Third revised edition, Voice of India, New Delhi, 1994.

The Vedic tradition has given to the world schools of Sanātana Dharma which have practised peace among their own followers as well as towards the followers of other paths. On the other hand, the Biblical tradition has spawned criminal cults such as Christianity, Islam, Communism, and Nazism which have always produced violent conflicts as much within their own camps as with each other and the rest of mankind.

II

History of Hindu-Christian encounters falls into five distinct phases. In all of them Christian missionaries stick to their basic dogma of One True God and the Only Saviour which Hindus should accept or be made to accept. But they keep on changing their methods and verbiage to suit changing circumstances. To start with, spokesmen for Hinduism offer a stiff resistance to the Christian message as well as missionary methods. But due to a number of factors, Hindu resistance weakens in subsequent stages and then disappears altogether so that Christianity forges ahead with a sense of triumph.

In the first-phase, which opens with the coming of the Portuguese pirates in the sixteenth century, more particularly the Patron Saint of those pirates, Francis Xavier, Christianity presents itself in its true colours. Its language is as crude as in its homeland in Europe, and its methods as cruel. Hindus are helpless and suffer any number of atrocities. Fortunately for them, this phase does not last for long. The Portuguese lose power except in Goa and some other small territories. The other European powers that take over have not much time to spare for Christianity except the French for a brief period in Pondicherry and their other possessions.

The second phase opens with the consolidation of the British conquest after the final defeat of the Marathas in 1813 CE. The British do not allow Christian missions to use physical methods. But missionary language continues to be as crude as ever. Christianity enjoys a brief period of self-confidence, particularly in Bengal. The phase ends with the rise of Hindu reform movements, particularly the clarion call given by Maharshi Dayananda and Swami Vivekananda. Christianity suffers a serious setback.

The third phase starts with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi and his slogan of *sarva-dharma-samabhāva*. Christian missions are thrown on the defensive and forced to change their language. The foulmouthed miscreants become sweet-tongued vipers. Now they are out to "share their spiritual riches" with Hindus, reminding us of a beggar in dirty rags promising to donate his wardrobe to wealthy persons. The phase ended with the Tambram Conference of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1938 which decided to reformulate Christian theology in the Indian context.

The fourth phase which commenced with the coming of independence proved a boon for Christianity. The Christian right to convert Hindus was incorporated in the Constitution: Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who dominated the scene for 17 long years, promoted every anti-Hindu ideology and movement behind the smokescreen of a counterfeit secularism. The regimes that followed continued to raise the spectre of 'Hindu communalism' as the most frightening phenomenon. Christian missionaries could now denounce as a Hindu communalist and chauvinist, even as a Hindu Nazi, any one who raised the slightest objection to their means and methods. All sorts of 'secularists' came forward to join the chorus. New theologies of Fulfilment, Indigenisation, Liberation, and Dialogue were evolved and put into action. The missionary apparatus multiplied fast and became pervasive. Christianity had never had it so good in the whole of its history in India. It now stood recognized as 'an ancient Indian religion' with every right to extend its field of operation and expand its flock. The only rift in the lute was K.M. Panikkar's book, *Asia and Western Dominance*, published from London in 1953, the Niyogi Committee Report published by the Government of Madhya Pradesh in 1956, and Om Prakash Tyagi's Bill on Freedom of Religion introduced in the Lok Sabha in December 1978.

The fifth phase which is continuing now, started with the Hindu awakening brought about by the mass conversion of Harijans to Islam at Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu, renewed Muslim aggression in many ways, and Pakistan-backed terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir. The Sangh Parivar which had turned cold towards Hindu causes over the years, was startled by the rout of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the 1984 elections to the Lok Sabha, and decided to renew its Hindu character. The Rāmajanmabhūmi Movement was the result. The Movement was aimed at arresting Islamic aggression. Christianity or its missions were hardly mentioned. Nevertheless, it was Christian missions which showed the greatest concern at this new Hindu stir, and started crying 'wolf'. Christian media power in the West raised a storm, saying *ad nauseum* that Hindus were out to destroy the minorities in India and impose a Nazi regime. The storm is still raging and no one knows when it will subside, if at all.

III

The Constitution of independent India adopted in January 1950 made things quite smooth for the Christian missions. They surged forward with renewed vigour. Nationalist resistance to what had been viewed as an imperialist incubus during the Struggle for Freedom from British rule, broke down when the very leaders who had frowned upon it started speaking in its favour. Voices which still remained 'recalcitrant' were sought to be silenced by being branded as those of 'Hindu communalism'. Nehruvian Secularism had stolen a march under the smokescreen of Mahatma Gandhi's *sarva-dharma-sambhāva*.

What was far more favourable to Christian missionaries, was the complete collapse of Hindu resistance which had been pretty strong during the Struggle for Freedom. Mahatma Gandhi had raised Jesus to the status of a spiritual giant, and Christianity itself to the status of a great religion as good as Sanātana Dharma. His mindless slogan of *sarva-dharma-samabhāva* was proving to be an effective smokescreen for Christian missions to steal a march against Hindu religion, society, and culture. In a letter written to C.D. Deshmukh on 22 June 1952, Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had said, "Nothing amazes me so much as the perversion of well-known words and phrases in political and other controversies today. I suppose every demagogue does it..."[2] He was blissfully unaware that he himself had become the most despicable demagogue in India's hoary history when he borrowed the word 'secularism' from Western political parlance and made it mean the opposite of what it had meant when it emerged during the European Enlightenment in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Secularism in the modern West had symbolized a humanist and rationalist revolt against the closed creed of Christianity and stood for pluralism such as has characterized Hinduism down the ages. But Pandit Nehru had perverted the word and turned it into a shield for protecting every closed creed prevailing in India at the dawn of independence in 1947 — Islam, Christianity, Communism. It is significant that the word 'secularism' cannot be found anywhere in Pandit Nehru's pre-independence writings and utterances of which we have a huge heap. Nor was this word used by any one in the Constituent Assembly debates which exist in cold print. Even in the

---

[2] *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 18, New Delhi, 1996, p. 661.

Constitution of India it was inserted arbitrarily by Indira Gandhi during the infamous Emergency (1975-77). It was solely due to Pandit Nehru's dishonest demagogy that this word became not only the most fashionable but also the most profitable political term for every enemy of India's indigenous society and culture. The first Prime Minister of independent India became the leader of a Muslim-Christian-Communist combine for forcing Hindus and Hinduism first on the defensive and then on a run for shelter. Now on everything which Hindus held sacred could be questioned, ridiculed, despised and insulted. At the same time the darkest dogmas of Islam and Christianity were not only placed beyond the pale of discussion but also invested with divinity so that anyone who asked any inconvenient questions about them invited the attention of laws which were made more and more punitive. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that the 'architect of modern India' was no more than a combined embodiment of all imperialist ideologies which had flocked to this ancient land in the company of alien invaders — Islam, Christianity, White Man's Burden, and Communism.

Small wonder that the Prime Minister of India should issue the following command to Chief Ministers of all States in his circular letter dated 17 October 1952:

> I have sometimes received complaints from Christian missions and missionaries both foreign and Indian, about the differential treatment accorded to them in certain States. It is said that there is some kind of harassment also occasionally. Some instances of this kind have come to my notice. I hope that your Government will take particular care that there is no such discrimination, much less harassment. I know that there is a hangover still of the old prejudice against Christian missions and missionaries. In the old days many of them except in the far south, where they were indigenous, represented the foreign power and sometimes even acted more or less as its agents. I know also that some of them in the north-east encouraged separatist and disruptive movements.

That phase is over. If any person, foreigner or Indian, behaves in that way still certainly we should take suitable action. But remember that Christianity is a religion of large numbers of people in India and that it came to the south of India nearly 2000 years ago. It is as much a part of the Indian scene as any other religion. Our policy of religious neutrality and protection of minorities must not be affected or sullied by discriminatory treatment or harassment. While Christian missionaries have sometimes behaved objectionably from the political point of view, they have undoubtedly done great service to India in the social field and they continue to give that service. In the tribal areas many of them have devoted their lives to the tribes there. I wish that there were Indians who were willing to serve the tribal folk in this way. I know that there are some Indians now who are doing this, but I would like more of them to do so. It must be remembered that the Christian community, by and large, is poor and is sometimes on the level of the backward or depressed classes. We permit, by our Constitution, not only freedom of conscience and belief but also proselytism. Personally I do not like proselytism and it is rather opposed to the old Indian outlook which is, in this matter, one of live and let live. But I do not want to come in other people's ways provided they are not objectionable in some other sense. In particular, I would welcome any form of real social service by anyone, missionary or not. A question arises, however, how far we should encourage foreigners to come here for purely evangelical work. Often these foreign countries raise funds on the plea of converting the savage heathens. I do no want anyone to come here who looks upon me as a savage heathen, not that I mind being called a heathen or a pagan by anybody. But I do not want any foreigner to come who looks down upon us or who speaks about us in their own countries in terms of contempt. But if any foreigner wants to come here for social service, I would welcome him.[3]

---

[3] *Ibid.*, Volume 19, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 733-34. See also Volume 21, pp. 365-66.

A footnote to this letter informs us that "On October 1952, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur drew Nehru's attention to complaints of such treatment of Christian missionaries in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh". Had Pandit Nehru been an Indian and a patriot, he would have referred Rajkumari Amrit Kaur to the Chief Ministers of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh before taking up the matter himself. But being the man he was — a coolie carrying the White Man's Burden — an allegation from a mouthpiece of Christian missions was sufficient for him to rush with a reprimand to the Chief Ministers of all States only a week after his ear was poisoned. There was no complaint regarding maltreatment of Christian missions from the rest of the States, yet he felt called upon to raise a general alarm. He not only anticipated all possible objections which he thought could be made against missions and missionary activities, he also tried his best to blunt those objections in his usual "if" and "but" way. The worst part of it all was that he repeated the Big Lie that Christianity was 2000 years old in India as, according to him, it was brought to India by St. Thomas in the first century of the Christian era. Even when he had told that story to his daughter in April 1932 in one of his schoolboyish essays which now pass as solid history, Christian historians had been debating for years whether a man called St. Thomas was a historical figure or a figment of theological speculation, and whether he ever came to South India. But Pandit Nehru who fancied himself as a great historian and was hailed as such by all sorts of fools and knaves around the world, had swallowed the story as soon as he heard it and kept on spreading it.

The followers of Mahatma Gandhi were the first to forget what their Master had said repeatedly on the subject of proselytization, namely, that it was "the deadliest poison which ever sapped the fountain of truth". Some of them found berths in the new power setup, and fell in line with Pandit Nehru. Some others who felt frustrated in the new situation for one reason or the other became fascinated by Mao-tse Tung and started seeing the Mahatma reincarnated in Red China. Constructive workers of the Gandhian movement gave priority to economic programmes and sidelined all social and cultural problems. A new breed of 'Gandhians' became busy floating Voluntary Agencies and looking forward to being funded by Western Foundations. Some of these Foundations were avowedly dedicated to promoting only Christian causes. Small wonder that the 'Gandhians' became, in due course, active or passive accomplices of the Christian missions.

The worst crisis, however, overtook those who became known as Hindu leaders in post-independence India. So long as the Mahatma was alive they had prospered by accusing him of promoting 'Muslim and Christian causes' at the cost of 'Hindu interests'. Now that he was no more, they did not really know what to do. Some of them continued to live in the past, deriving satisfaction from cursing the Mahatma for misleading the country for all time to come. Others revised their attitude towards him, but they did so more out of convenience than conviction. *Sarva-dharma-samabhāva* acquired a new meaning for them also. Criticism of Christian dogmas became a 'negative' approach. The 'positive' approach, they started saying, should match the Christian missionary effort in the fields of education, medicine and social services. It did not occur to them that Hindu society being poor and bereft of a State of its own, was in no position to run the race. The 'positive' approach thus became, for all practical purposes, an excuse for not facing the problem of Christian subversion at all.

The bright sunshine in which Christian missions started basking can be reported best in the words of a Jesuit missionary. "The Indian Church," writes Plattner, "has reason to be glad that the Constitution of the country guarantees her an atmosphere of freedom and equality with other much stronger religious communities. Under the protection of this guarantee she is able, ever since independence, not only to carry on but to *increase and develop her activity as never before without serious hindrance or anxiety*."[4] The number of foreign missionaries registered an unprecedented increase. "One must admit," continues Plattner, "that the number of missionaries who came to India soon after independence had perceptibly increased. During the war years very few of them ever reached India. So a kind of surplus was building in Europe with corresponding lack of personnel in India... At the same time the Communists were expelling thousands of missionaries mainly members of the American sects from China. Some of them were then transferred to India but not all of them could adapt themselves to Indian conditions."[5]

---

[4] Felix Alfred Plattner, *The Catholic Church in India: Yesterday and Today*, Allahabad, 1964, p. 6. Emphasis added.

Far more foreboding than this forward march of the Christian missions, however, was the fact that they were able to take in their stride two serious exposures of their character and activities made during the fifties. The first jolt they received was from the above-mentioned book by K. M. Panikkar published in 1953. The second was the publication, in 1956, of the Niyogi Committee's report on Christian missionary activities in Madhya Pradesh. The powers that be — the Government, the political parties, the national press, and the intellectual elite — either protected the missions for one reason or the other or shied away from studying and discussing the exposures publicly for fear of being accused of 'Hindu communalism', the ultimate swearword in the armoury of Nehruvian Secularism.

Thus howsoever serious the flutter which these exposures caused inside missionary dovecotes, the atmosphere outside continued to be favourable for them. Of course, 'narrow minded and fanatical Hindu communalists' provided some pin-pricks off and on. But they came to nothing in every instance. "The question was raised in Parliament," narrates Plattner, "as to whether the right to propagate religion was applicable only to Indian citizens or also to foreigners residing in India, for example, the missionaries. In March 1954, the Supreme Court of India expressed its opinion that this right was a fundamental one firmly established in the Constitution and thus applied to everyone citizen and noncitizen alike who enjoyed the protection of India's laws. With this explanation the missionaries were expressly authorised to spread the faith, thus fulfilling the task entrusted to them by the Church."[6]

---

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

In 1955, a Bill came before India's Parliament "which if passed would have seriously handicapped the work of Christian missionaries", because it "provided for a strict system of regulating conversions". The issue was conversions brought about by force, fraud or material inducements. But no less a person than the Prime Minister of India, Pandit Nehru, came to the rescue of Christian missions and persuaded the Parliament to throw out the Bill. "I fear that this Bill," said Pandit Nehru, "will not help very much in suppressing evil methods but might very well be the cause of great harassment to a large number of people. We should deal with those evils on a different plane, in other ways, not in this way which may give rise to other ways of coercion. *Christianity is one of the important religions of India, established here for nearly two thousand years*. We must not do anything which gives rise to any feeling of oppression or suppression in the minds of our Christian friends and fellow-countrymen."[7]

The signing of the defence pact between the U.S.A. and Pakistan in 1954 had, however, made the Government of India somewhat strict about granting of visas to foreign, particularly American, missionaries. "The Catholic Bishops' of India," writes Plattner, "found it very difficult to reconcile themselves to this new turn of affairs, which they considered highly unpleasant and unjustifiable. In March 1955 a delegation under the leadership of Cardinal Gracias of Bombay requested an interview with Prime Minister Nehru and Home Minister Pandit [Govind Ballabh] Pant, who had succeeded Dr. [Kailash Nath] Katju."[8] Pandit Nehru, according to the Secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, was "sympathetic but pointed out that the problem was political and national, not religious". Pandit Pant, on the other hand, gave a practical advice which proved very helpful to Christian missions in the long run. "He could not understand," continues Plattner, "why the Catholic Church, which had a long and historic existence in the country, had not succeeded in training Indian priests and professors for seminaries. The interview helped us to realise that in every sphere we have to recruit locally and train selected candidates for responsible positions."[9] The Home Minister of India, it seems, had no objection to the sale of a narcotic provided the vendors were native. Nor did he see any danger in the spread of a network financed and controlled completely from abroad. The lesson that the East India Company had subjugated the country by training and employing native mercenaries, had not been learnt.

---

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

[7] Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 7. Emphasis added. There is no record that Pandit Nehru ever gave any thought to the 'different plane' or 'other ways' of dealing with 'those evils'. It remained his life-long privilege "to talk vaguely and generally about things in general", as he himself had said. His patent way of showing disapproval was to talk of a 'different plane' and 'other ways'. Those who understood his language took the hint and fell in line. It may also be noted that he again repeats the story of Christianity being 2000 year old in India.

Another Bill was introduced in the Parliament in 1960 for protecting Scheduled Castes and Tribes "from change of religion forced on them on grounds other than religious convictions". It was also thrown out because of resistance from the ruling Congress Party. "It was rejected," records Plattner, "after Mr. [B.N.] Datar declared in no uncertain terms that it was unconstitutional and that there were no mass conversions as alleged by the mover." The Minister went much further. "They were carrying on," he said, "Christ's mission by placing themselves at the service of mankind and such work was one of their greatest contributions to the world." He credited Christian missionaries with "the uplift of a large number of downtrodden people through their schools and social work."[10]

---

[8] Christians were unhappy with Dr. Katju because in April 1953 he had made a statement in Parliament that "for a long time he had been in possession of information about questionable proselytising activities of missionaries in Central India" (*Ibid.*, p. 10).

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

"This attitude of Nehru and his government," concluded Plattner, "has inspired the Christians with confidence in the Indian Constitution."[11] Nehru had "remained true to his British upbringing."[12] Small wonder that the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India became quite optimistic about the future. "With the Indian Hierarchy well established," it proclaimed in September 1960, "and the recruitment of the clergy fairly assured, it may be said that the Church in India has reached its maturity and has achieved the first part of its missionary programme. The time seems to have come to face squarely the *Church's next and more formidable duty: the conversion of the masses of India*."[13]

IV

There were good grounds for this optimism. Conversions to Christianity were on the increase as was soon indicated by the Census of 1971. "In India as a whole," wrote a Christian historian, F.S. Downs, "the Christian population increased by 64.9% between 1951 and 1971. This may be compared with a general population increase of 51.7% during the same period. In North East India the Christian population increased by 171.1% during the same period, compared with a general population growth in that region of 116.5%. Even these figures do not give the full picture because in 1971, 74.7% of the total North East India population was in Assam where the growth of the Christian community is the lowest. In the 1961-71 decade alone the growth of the Christian community in states and territories other than Assam was as follows:

---

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[13] Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 134. Emphasis added.

State	Percentage Growth of Christians	Percentage Growth of General Population
Nagaland	76.29%	39.88%
Meghalaya	75.43%	31.55%
Manipur	83.66%	37.33%
Tripura	56.52%	36.28%

In the 1951-1971 period, the Christian growth in Nagaland was 251.6% and in Tripura 298.6%... According to the Census of 1901 Christians in the North East constituted 1.23% of the whole, by 1951 the proportion was 7.8% and in 1971, 12.5%. North East India now had 39.8% of the non-southern Christian population."[14]

Downs has not given figures for Mizoram, the Lushai Hills District of Assam, which was raised to the status of a State in 1987. The Christian population in this area had risen from 0.05% of the total population in 1901 to 80.31% in 1951 due to the efforts of Protestant missions. In 1971, Christianity came to claim 86.09%. As against the general growth rate of 34.69% between 1951 and 1961 and 24.69 percent between 1961 and 1971, the growth rate of Christian population had been 46% and 25% for the two decades respectively.[15]

A major part of this rich harvest in this region had been reaped by the Catholic Church. "Without question," continued Downs, "the most important postwar development has been the rapid expansion of the Roman Catholic Church. At the beginning of the war there were but 50,000 Catholics in the region; in 1977 there were 369,681. In part this was due to an *extraordinary expenditure of resources both in terms of money and missionary personnel*, including personnel brought in from other parts of India. But it was due also to the removal after independence of the restrictions the British had placed upon Catholic missions."[16]

---

[14] F.S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspectives*, Gauhati, 1983, pp. 3-4.

[15] C.L. Himinga, *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram*, Serkwan, 1987, p. 9.

This spate of conversions could be traced directly to the expansion of Catholic education. "The growth of Catholic educational programme in the North East," noted the historian, "was certainly phenomenal. While in 1935 they were operating 299 primary schools, 9 middle and high schools, and 2 colleges, by 1951 the numbers had increased to 591, 65 and 2 respectively. By 1977 there were 744 primary schools, 63 middle and high schools (a slight decrease) and 4 colleges… Altogether there were 811 educational institutions with 79, 891 students."[17]

The North East region reflected the expansion of Catholic education in the country as a whole. "The dawn of independence," wrote the Catholic educationist, T. A. Mathias, in 1971, "is a landmark in the development of Christian educational work in this country. Since 1947 there has been a fantastic expansion in the number of Christian institutions, chiefly among the Roman Catholics. Colleges have gone up from 42 to 114 and secondary schools from 500 to 1,200. The Catholic Directory, 1969, gives fairly accurate statistics for Catholic educational work. There are now 6000 elementary schools, 1200 secondary schools, 114 colleges, and 80 specialised institutions."[18]

The Catholic Directory of India 1984, reported a still more phenomenal growth. The number of kindergarten (elementary schools) in 1981 had reached 2,550, the number of primary schools 6,183 and the number of secondary schools 2,986. The Directory does not give the number of colleges and specialized institutions, though it tells us that 1,141,787 students were studying in Catholic colleges and 35,519 in institutes for other studies.

The Catholic educational network, however, represents only a part of the Catholic apparatus, though it is the most important from the missionary point of view. It alienates Hindu young men and women from their ancestral culture or at least neutralises them against missionary inroads if it does not incline them positively towards the promotion of Christianity. Schools at the lower levels and in rural and tribal areas win converts directly by forgoing tuition fees, providing free textbooks and stationery etc., housing students freely in hostels, and giving free meals to day scholars. Colleges provide many recruits to the higher echelons in government services besides executives in business houses. Most of them look quite favourably at the 'humanitarian services which Hindus have neglected'. Big sums flow into the coffers of the Catholic missions from bribes given by neo-rich Hindu parents looking forward to their children speaking English in the 'proper accent'. Convent educated girls are in great demand in the Hindu marriage market.

---

[16] F.S. Downs, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-52. Emphasis added.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

[18] Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 153.

By 1995 this educational network had become powerful enough to be used as a political weapon as well. The New Delhi edition of the *Indian Express* flashed on 22 November 1995 the following report datelined New Delhi. Nov. 21, 1995: "More than 10,000 Christian schools and 240 Christian colleges in different parts of the country remained closed today in support of the demand for extension of Scheduled Caste benefits to Dalit Christians. The decisions to keep these institutions closed was taken by the National Coordination Committee for Scheduled Caste Christians and the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI)." In October-November 1997, these institutions were again used as a political weapon in order to pressurize the Government of Bihar for release of a Jesuit priest who was arrested by the police for sodomizing a tribal boy in a school in Dumka where the Jesuit happened to be a teacher.

The other part of the apparatus comprises what are known as medical, social, and humanitarian service agencies. In 1984 the Catholic missions maintained 615 hospitals, 1529 dispensaries, 221 leprosoria, 309 homes for the aged and the handicapped, 1,233 orphanages and 1,271 centres for training people in various crafts and skills. That is also where work of conversion is carried on openly. These services are free or very cheap for those who show readiness to embrace 'the only true faith'. For others, they are quite expensive, particularly the hospitals furnished with imported equipment of the latest kind.

This apparatus was spread in 1984 over 17,288 mission stations and manned by 49,956 religious women, 4,993 religious priests and 2,801 religious men other than priests. The missionary personnel was grouped in 167 congregations of sisters, 39 congregations of priests and 19 congregations of brothers. The sisters functioned from more than 4000 houses maintained in different parts of the country by a personnel of more than 56,000. Corresponding figures for priests came to more than 700 houses and a personnel of nearly 14,000, and for brothers it was nearly 200 houses with a personnel of more than 2,000. Besides, there were 14 secular institutes with nearly 30 houses and a personnel of nearly 400. A majority of these congregations had their headquarters abroad — 97 of sisters, 25 of priests, 8 of brothers. Though they recruited their personnel for the most part from India, their control was completely in the hands of establishments abroad. As many as 26,541 catechists were in the field for netting new birds and making them cram the Catholic creed.

There was a corresponding expansion of what is called the Catholic Hierarchy which the Pope had taken over, partly from the Portuguese, in 1886. The Hierarchy had grown apace till 1947 when it had 10 Archdioceses and 35 Dioceses. By 1984, a period of only 37 years, the number of Archdioceses had almost doubled to 19 and that of Dioceses more than trebled to 110. A record increase of 18 Dioceses in a single year took place in 1977-78 when the Janata Party was in power. Six of these were created in the sensitive areas of Madhya Pradesh where the State Government had stalled expansion of the Hierarchy after the Niyogi Committee report on Christian missions had laid bare the missionary mischief in 1956. The Government of Madhya Pradesh in 1977, it may be noted, was dominated by the erstwhile Jana Sangh component of the Janata Party.[19]

The Hierarchy presided over 5,159 parishes and quasiparishes grouped in 110 ecclesiastical territories and manned by 7,058 diocesan priests. The Directory gives the Latin names of Bulls and Decrees proclaimed by the Pope while creating new Dioceses and Archdioceses and appointing Bishops and Archbishops on advice from his Nuncio in New Delhi. Neither the Government of India nor any State Government has ever been consulted in the matter. In 1974, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had started negotiations for a Pre-Notification Treaty with the Vatican but the Pope had stalled them on one excuse or the other. The Janata Party dropped even the negotiations when it came to power in 1977. The Pope was thus free to continue carving out a State within the State.

In addition, the Catholic apparatus controlled some 150 printing presses and more than 200 periodicals in English and Indian languages. Around 350 seminaries of all sorts were busy training missionaries, priests and other specialised functionaries for its missions. The number of students in these seminaries was 2,125 in 1984. In the same year, 3,528 persons turned out by these seminaries were candidates for religious priesthood.[20]

The Catholic Dictionary of India, 1994, provides "data computed from the information sent in by Dioceses, from the Statistical Year Book of the Church 1987 and from CRI Directory 1990". The number of kindergarten and nursery schools had risen to 7,319, that of primary schools to 7,319 and of secondary schools to 3,765. This time the number of colleges is given as 240 with 213,392 students. The number of technical and training schools (i.e. specialized institutions) is not given but the number of students is noted as 1,514. Some educational institutions had hostels and boarding houses attached to them with 1,765 inmates.

---

[19] I tried to find out from various bigwigs of the then Janata Party including the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai, the reason for this sudden spurt. I drew a blank. No one was even aware that this had happened. The Catholic Church alone knows and can reveal the secret.

[20] For full details, See Sita Ram Goel, *Papacy: Its Doctrine and History*, New Delhi, 1986. It is a Voice of India publication.

The medical and social welfare agencies in 1994 comprised 704 hospitals, 1,792 dispensaries and health centres, 1085 orphanages, 228 creches, 111 leprosoria, 102 rehabilitation centres and 455 homes for the aged, destitutes and handicapped.

The number of mission stations had gone up to 17,467 manned by 6,451 religious priests, 1,584 religious brothers, and 62,283 sisters. The number of religious men other than priests is not given, nor of the catechists in the field. This religious personnel was grouped in 43 congregations of priests, 17 of brothers and 190 of sisters. At another place (p. 1147) the Directory for 1994 provides another table of "Religious of India Today". According to this table there were 45 congregations of priests with 108 major superiors, 12,787 priests, 1,117 novices and 4,984 candidates; 16 congregations of brothers with 30 major superiors, 1,652 brothers, 221 novices and 543 candidates; and 202 congregations of sisters, with 378 major superiors, 67,375 sisters, 4,849 novices and 8,783 candidates. Besides, there were 44 cloistered congregations with 711 inmates, 60 novices and 82 candidates spread over 11 regional and 101 local units. The actual number of religious congregations listed in detail in this Directory, however, is 56 for priests, 19 for brothers, 224 for sisters, and 6 for cloistered sisters. It seems that 'India Today' refers to some year earlier than 1994. The number of houses from which these congregations function and the personnel which maintains them is not given, nor the number of secular institutes with their houses and personnel.

And as in 1984, in 1994 also most of the religious congregations had their headquarters abroad. Of the 56 congregations of priests, 30 had their headquarters in Italy, 3 in France, and 1 each in England and Switzerland. Of the rest, 10 represented foreign congregations with only provinces and delegates in India. In the case of sisters, 61 congregations had their headquarters in Italy, 19 in France, 11 in Germany, 6 in Spain, 5 in Switzerland, 4 in Belgium, 2 each in England and the USA, and 1 each in Austria, Holland, Ireland, Pakistan, Portugal and Sri Lanka. Of the rest, 21 represented foreign congregations with provincials and delegates, and 2 were mixed, that is, foreign congregations in collaboration with Indian ones. Of the 6 congregations of cloistered sisters, 4 had their headquarters abroad — Germany, Italy, England and France. Coming to brothers, 7 congregations had their headquarters in Italy and 1 each in England and Ireland.

Of course, some religious congregations had their headquarters in India — 11 in the case of priests, 86 in the case of sisters, and 10 in the case of brothers. But that was only the form. In substance these congregations also derived their inspiration from prototypes abroad, or were patterned after them. In any case, most of these 'Indian' congregations, like the others, were named after Christian saints who had nothing to do with India and most of whom were criminals or crusaders against infidels, which category has always included Hindus.[21] Or they, like their foreign-based companions, flaunted pompous or pretentious names derived from Christian Theology — Blessed Sacrament, Mary Immaculate, Immaculate Heart, Passion of Jesus Christ, Immaculate Conception, Holy Cross, Holy Spirit, Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Catholic Apostolate, Most Holy Redeemer, Precious Blood, Divine Word, Most Holy Trinity, Assumption, Most Holy Saviour, Charity of Jesus and Mary, Providence of Gap, Divine Providence, Our Lady of Fatima, Good Shepherd, Christ the King, Our Lady of Graces and Compassion, Holy Family, Blessed Virgin, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Mary Mediatrix, Incarnation, Our Lady of the Missions, Divine Master, Queen of Apostolates, Mother of Sorrows, Maria Auxilium, Redemption, Divine Saviour, Visitation of the Blessed Virgin

---

[21] In order to understand the character of Christian saints, one has to study the Processes which were compiled in order to qualify them for canonization.

Mary, Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration, etc. The whole of this quaint jargon is alien to India not only in language but also in spirit.

The most significant point about this part of the apparatus is the marked increase in the number of religious sisters. Their number had grown from 45,286 in 1976 to 46,168 in 1977, 48,466 in 1978, 49,657 in 1979 and 50,936 in 1980. But as per the 1994 Directory the number stood at 62,283 (p. LX) or 67,375 (p. 1147). The number of Religious Priests, on the other hand had grown from 4,655 in 1976 to 4,638 in 1977, 4,695 in 1979, 4,943 in 1981 to 6,451 (p. LX) or 12,787 (p. 1147) in 1994. The explanation for expansion of religious sisters is provided by a document 'Trends and Issues in Evangelization in India' published by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India in 1994. It proclaims that "Women Religious will play more decisive role in the missions"[22] We can foresee an accelerating increasing in the number of sisters in the years to come.

It may be pointed out that notwithstanding the pompous words 'evangelization' and 'mission' used, the reality regarding these 'religious sisters' has been and remains quite ugly. An overwhelming majority of them are girls either raised in Catholic orphanages or bought for a pittance from poor families and brainwashed to believe that they have become 'brides of Jesus Christ' by taking 'holy orders'. They are crowded into convents or cloistered, made to live a life of deprivation, and used as slave labour in the hospitals and social welfare institutions of the missions. The late lamented Mother Teresa had presided for long over a network of these female slaves — the Sisters of Charity. The network continues and may grow unless it attracts the attention of some champions of human rights. These unfortunate girls are also exported to Europe and the USA where females are no more coming forward to fill the convents. There are some other uses to which these 'brides of Jesus Christ' are put quite frequently. We refer the readers interested to documented studies on the subject.[23]

---

[22] Arun Shourie, *Missionaries in India*, New Delhi, 1994, Annexure 1, p. 251.

The Catholic Hierarchy according to the 1994 Directory had 2 Cardinals, 19 Archdioceses, 126 Dioceses, and 6,277 parishes and quasiparishes, manned by 8,621 diocesan priests and 4,419 scholastics in clerical orders. It had 7 theological institutes, and 560 major and minor seminaries employing 6,310 seminarians. Besides, the Catholic Church owns 169 printing presses and 238 newspapers and periodicals in English and Indian languages. There are quite a few bookshops in different cities selling literature churned out by Catholic scribes in India and abroad.

This whole apparatus in India is presided over by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) housed in a huge mansion in New Delhi and staffed by specialists from various fields. The CBCI has 5 standing committees, and 11 commissions — for social communication; ecumenism and dialogue; justice, development and peace; education and culture, schedule castes/tribes and backward classes; clergy and religious; laity; youth; labour; health; and doctrine. Two special commissions look after evangelization and inter-ritual matters. Each commission is assisted by a number of organisations and bodies drawn from the commission's specialized fields. Its commands are carried out by 12 regional councils, 20 national organisations and 13 major associations.

And this leviathan is controlled by the Pope in Rome through his Nuncio in New Delhi. For all practical purposes, it is a State within the State. The tyrannies that take place within this prison-house are never mentioned in the Indian media, not to speak of being investigated.

We have not been able to obtain and analyse corresponding data regarding the expansion of the Protestant missions and churches. They stopped publishing consolidated figures quite some time ago. It can, however, be safely assumed that there has been a considerable expansion of the Protestant apparatus as well, though it might not have been as phenomenal as the Catholic. Missions from or financed by the U.S.A. and West Germany, we are told, have become particularly prosperous and are active over wider fields.

---

[23] Voice of India has recently (1997) reprinted one of these studies, *Women, Church and State* by Matilda Joslyn Gage, first published in the USA in 1893.

The cost of maintaining and expanding this huge missionary apparatus, Catholic and Protestant, should be considerable though it is kept a closely guarded secret by the missions and churches in India. The budgets for maintaining missions and church hierarchies are never made public. Not even a hint is available in Christian publications regarding how much money is received and from where. The Christian community in India is too poor to maintain this colossal and expensive edifice, not to speak of financing its widespread and multifarious operations. The logical conclusion that the apparatus is financed almost entirely from abroad, is confirmed by the budgets published by controllers of missions in Europe and America. A publication house in New Delhi has reprinted in 1996 *A History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists' Foreign Missions, To the End of 1904*. Operating in Khasia and Jaintia Hills (present-day Meghalaya), this mission spent £ 2,188 between May 1841 and December 1904 (p. 308). Figures of foreign remittances to Christian organisations are also made known by the Government of India from time to time. "One billion dollars," says a recent and reliable report, "that is how much American Protestant Christian organisations spent last year [1988] trying to gain conversions from other religions, and the Catholic Church spent an equal amount. According to official Indian government reports US dollars 165 millions is sent to Christian missions in India each year."[24] This represents a staggering increase on the amount of foreign remittances noted by the

---

[24] 'The Big Business of Evangelisation', *Hinduism Today*, February 1989. As always, this article too is based on wide-ranging research.

Niyogi Committee for the period from January 1950 to June 1954.[25]

Thus it can be maintained no longer that the Portuguese and British imperialists alone were responsible for the expansion of Christianity in India. The native Indian rulers have proved far more helpful to the Christian missions. They have provided constitutional protection to Christian propaganda. They have made it possible for the missions to enter into areas from where the British had kept them out. What is most important, in the years since independence Christianity has come to acquire a prestige which it had enjoyed never before in this country.

It cannot be said that the country has not faced problems created by Christian missions. Converts to Christianity in the North East and Central India have constantly evinced separatist and secessionist tendencies. The Government of India has recognised the mischief potential of Christian missions by expelling from the country several well known missionaries who were found fomenting political unrest and promoting violence. But the larger lesson that Christian missions in general mean no good and much mischief to the country and its culture, has yet to be learnt.

Even before independence, some Christian missionaries had ganged up with the Muslim League and floated the scheme of a sovereign Christian State composed of tribal areas in the North East and Central India. The two enclaves were to be linked together by a corridor passing through Bengal and Bihar. The Nizam of Hyderabad was expected to provide another corridor towards Christian populations in the Madras Presidency (now Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) and the princely states of Travancore and Cochin (now Kerala). It was hoped that, in due course, these Christian populations would gravitate towards the sovereign Christian State and provide access to the Christian world outside via the Coromandal and Malabar coasts.

---

[25] See Volume I, p. 96 of the Niyogi Committee Report reprinted in Section II.

4774

The movement for an independent Travancore had drawn enthusiastic support from the local Christians. Cochin was expected to follow suit.

After independence, the hand of Christian missions has been manifest in violent secessionist uprisings in Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura. Christian missions in these areas have not been loathe to join hands with the Communists who have pursued the same aim in cooperation with Red China. It has cost India vast sums of money for meeting the menace militarily. Thousands of lives have been lost. And the fires lighted by the Christian missionaries are still burning or smouldering under the surface in spite of concessions made in the shape of several Christian majority States.

Meanwhile, the Christian sponsored agitation for a separate State of Jharkhand has been gaining strength. "A secret report of Intelligence Bureau," according to the *Indian Express* of January 13, 1989, "has claimed that some voluntary organisations who received foreign contributions had been 'covertly' helping the Jharkhand movement for a separate state comprising 21 districts of Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa. The organisations named by the report are: The Willian Carey Study and Research Centre (WCSRC), the Christian Institution for Study of Religion and Science (CISRC), the Liberal Association for the Movement of People (LAMP), the Gana Unnayan Parishad (GUP), and the Indian People's Welfare Society (IPWS). The Forum for the Concerned Rural Journalists (FCRJ) with its registered office at Jhargram, was also said to be a recipient of subsidy from WCSRC and CISRC."

Some of the foreign organisations from which finances flow to these "voluntary organisations" in India have also been named. "According to the report GUP, WCSRC etc., had been getting foreign contributions from several foreign agencies including 'EZE, ECCO and AGKED (West Germany), NAVIB Foundation (Netherlands). Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), World Council of Churches (Geneva) and Bread for the World'."

The "voluntary organisations" know how to get around the laws of the land for serving their subterranean purposes. "These organisations, the report said, had their own techniques for circumventing Government regulations. The organisations receiving foreign contributions registered themselves with the Central Government, maintained an account of foreign contributions and kept records about the purpose and manner of utilisation of funds. But, while the annual returns of these organisations to the Reserve Bank of India showed that the money was spent on cultural, economic, educational, religious and social programmes, in reality, the report claimed, much less amount than that claimed in the returns was actually spent on the programmes, with the rest being either 'misappropriated' or 'clandestinely donated to designing organisations and elements to further their ulterior objectives'."

They also play hide and seek with the law enforcement agencies of the Government. "They operate in cooperation with many other voluntary organisations. If one particular organisation comes to adverse notice it floats some other cover, and front organisations maintain close liason with organisations which have not come under the cloud. GUP and IPWS had thus been floated by the WCRSC and LAMP... WCSRC had been reportedly giving monetary help to the Jharkhand Coordination Committee, a common front with 49 cultural and political groups and mass organisations formed to give a new pitch to the Jharkhand movement... The organisation, the report said, encouraged 'struggles of working people, women, tribals, dalits, oppressed and children' of the Jharkhand region 'inciting' the organisations for a separate Jharkhand state."

Such a report in a leading national daily called for some comments from leaders of the nation, if not questions in Parliament. But it was not even noticed, least of all by those who pass as Hindu leaders, not to speak of politicians who swear by Secularism. The only response it elicited was some letters of protest from the functionaries of Christian organisations. In the letters-to-the-editor column of the daily they denounced the report as concocted. The editor maintained that the report emanated from reliable and responsible quarters. That was the end of the matter. The Christian missions in India had not a worry in the world except that caused by their own theological quibbles.

Two

Rift in the Lute

The Christian missionary orchestra in India after independence has continued to rise from one crescendo to another with the applause of the Nehruvian establishment manned by a brood of self-alienated Hindus spawned by missionary-macaulayite education. The only rift in the lute has been K.M. Panikkar's *Asia and Western Dominance* published in 1953, the *Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Committee Madhya Pradesh* published in 1956, Om Prakash Tyagi's Bill on Freedom of Religion introduced in the Lok Sabha in 1978, Arun Shourie's *Missionaries in India* published in 1994 and the Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill introduced in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly by Mangal Prabhat Lodha, M.L.A., on 20 December 1996. We shall summarise in this chapter what these rifts revealed, and the reactions to them not only from the Christian missionaries but also from the 'secular' establishment.

K. M. PANIKKAR

Panikkar's study was primarily aimed at providing a survey of Western imperialism in Asia from CE 1498 to 1945. Christian missions came into the picture simply because he found them arrayed always and everywhere alongside Western gunboats, diplomatic pressures, extraterritorial rights, and plain gangsterism. Contemporary records consulted by him could not but cut to size the inflated images of Christian heroes such as Francis Xavier and Matteo Ricci. They were found to be not much more than minions employed by European kings and princes scheming to carve out empires in the East. Their methods of trying to convert kings and commoners in Asia, said Panikkar, were force or fraud or conspiracy and morally questionable in every instance. Finding that "missionary activities… which became so prominent a feature of European relations with Asia were connected with Western political supremacy in Asia and synchronised with it"[1] he concluded: "It may indeed be said that the most serious, persistent and planned effort of European nations in the nineteenth century was their missionary activities in India and China, where a large-scale attempt was made to effect a mental and spiritual conquest at supplementing the political authority already enjoyed by Europe. Though the results were disappointing in the extreme from the missionary point of view, this assault on the spiritual foundations of Asian countries has had far-reaching consequences in the religious and social reorganization of the people…"[2]

What hurt the Christian missionaries most, however, was Panikkar's observation that "the doctrine of the monopoly of truth and revelation… is alien to the Hindu and Buddhist mind" and that "to them the claim of any sect that it alone represented the truth and others shall be condemned has always seemed unreasonable".[3] He had knocked the bottom out of the missionary enterprise. No monopoly of truth and revelation, no missions. It was as simple as that.

Most people in the targeted countries do not know that the first missionaries sent out by the Pope Innocent IV after the Council of Lyons in 1245 CE were spies commissioned to gather information about the strength and resources of the

---

[1] K.M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, London (1953), Seventh Impression, 1967, p. 15.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 314.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

Mongols who had swept over West Asia and were posing a serious threat to Christendom in Europe. The second mission was that of John de Monte Carvino commissioned by the Pope to visit the court of Kublai Khan at Peking for the same purpose. He started to smuggle Christianity in China surreptitiously by buying slaves and baptizing them and building a few churches. The Pope in Rome felt great joy that the 'only true faith' was spreading in China. But within a few years of Carvino's death in 1328 the entire edifice built by him collapsed and not a trace of it was left except in his letters to the Pope.[4]

The Christian missionary enterprise in earnest started with the dogged efforts of Don Henry the Navigator (1394-1460), the third son of the King John I of Portugal. Henry was a militant Christian fired with a bitter hatred for infidels. He was obsessed with the idea of reaching and converting India, and believed that he had received a command from God for this purpose. He had at his disposal the immense wealth of the Order of Christ of which he was the Grand Master.[5] In 1454 Pope Nicholas V issued a Bull granting to the King of Portugal "the right, total and absolute, to invade, conquer, and subject all the countries which are under rule of the enemies of Christ, Saracens or Pagans..." On March 13, 1456 this first Bull was confirmed by a second one by Pope Calixtus III. Finally, Pope Alexander VI confirmed the Treaty of Tordesilhas signed on June 9, 1494 in terms of which he divided the world, east and west, between Portugal and Spain to conquer and convert.[6] The kings of Portugal fitted and sent several naval expeditions to India, and King Dom Manoel "assumed for himself the title of 'The Lord of the Navigation, Conquest and Commerce of Ethiopia, Persia and India'."[7] The Society of Jesus (Jesuits) though founded by a Spaniard, Ignatius Loyola, "found a staunch supporter and champion in the Portuguese monarch". Henceforward Portugal became the base of the missionary enterprise in Asia. It is noteworthy that some of the great figures in the history of Christian missionary activities in the East came to adopt Portugal as their second country "with the revival of religious zeal within the Catholic church following the Protestant movement... Francis Xavier, a Spaniard, came out as the Portuguese King's Inspector of Missions. Father Vagliano, an Italian recruited in Lisbon forty-two missionaries of whom only six were Portuguese. To Ricci, another Italian, who completed his education at Coimbra and Goa, Portugal was the spiritual home."[8] Small wonder that "with the Portuguese christianization was a state enterprise" and that the Portuguese kings "paid for the entire ecclesiastical establishment in the East".[9]

---

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 279-80.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

The great merit of Panikkar's book is that it provides a history of missionary activities in every country of South and South-East Asia as well as in the Far East — India, China, Japan, Annam, Cambodia, Cochin-China, Laos, Siam (Thailand), Burma, and Indonesia. We shall take up missionary doings in some of these countries and the support they received from various Western powers.

India

Christian missionaries had accompanied every Portuguese naval expedition to India after Vasco da Gama reached Calicut in Malabar in 1498. In 1534, Goa which had been occupied by the Portuguese in 1509 "was made a bishopric with authority extending over the entire Far East". Rooting out of Hinduism was a special task assigned to every Portuguese viceroy. "Hindu temples in Goa were destroyed and their property distributed to religious orders (like the Franciscans) in 1540." With the arrival of Francis Xavier in Goa in 1542 and the establishment of the College of St. Paul by him, Goa became the centre for training missionaries to be sent out to other countries in Asia. "For the next hundred years entry of missionaries into the Far East was permitted only through Goa." Under advice from Francis Xavier, the king of Portugal established the Inquisition in Goa.[10] "Intolerance of things Indian became henceforth the characteristic feature of missionary zeal in India. Any compromise with Hindu life or religion was avoided e.g. the eating of beef was held to be necessary as it would put the converts altogether out of the pale of Hinduism." But Portuguese power decayed in the second half of the seventeenth century and Portugal's interest in missionary work declined even in South India. "The establishment of the Inquisition in Goa (1561) and the auto da fé (first instance 1563) revolted the conscience of both Hindus and Muslims alike."[11] Even in Goa, the majority of population continued to be non-Christian. Thus the "attempt of the Portuguese, secular and missionary,… to carry the heathen fort by assault" had failed.[12]

---

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 280.

It was now the turn of the Protestant missions to evangelize India by all means short of physical force. Small Protestant missions had been established in some coastal areas of South India from 1660 onwards. But the big boost came with the foundation of the Church Missionary Society by the Anglican Church in 1799 and "other sects followed in their wake". The Baptist Mission was established at Serampore near Calcutta by William Carey in 1803. "A violent propaganda campaign was launched by Carey and his associates against Hinduism in Bengal which seemed to them to be in a state of dissolution. But Hindu orthodoxy reacted vigorously and Lord Minto felt obliged to prohibit such propaganda in Calcutta." He had in mind the Vellore Mutiny which had outraged the religious sentiments of the sepoys.[13]

Christian missions achieved some small success in Bengal after India was thrown open to missionaries at large in 1813. But once again, Hindu response in the shape of reform movements was strong, and the missionaries received another severe jolt. More significant gains were made by the missions in Travancore where the Raja was threatened with deposition when he tried to prevent the conversion of some depressed classes. "The action opened the eyes of other ruling princes and there were a number of important states where no missionary activity of any kind, including schools, was permitted upto 1947."[14]

---

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 280.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 281.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 283.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 290.

The British Government of India had pretended to be indifferent to Christian missions, particularly after the Revolt of 1857. But it helped the missions indirectly. "Legislation protected the right of converts to their share in Hindu joint families, and High Court decisions enabled converts to blackmail their wives to follow them into the fold of their new religion. The Government also encouraged the missionaries to work among the backward tribes."[15] Another design which the British evolved to promote Christianization of India was T.B. Macaulay's educational system introduced in 1835. "It was the devout hope of Macaulay... and of many others, that the diffusion of new learning among the higher classes would see the dissolution of Hinduism and the widespread acceptance of Christianity. The missionaries were of the same view, and they entered the education field with enthusiasm, providing schools and colleges in many parts of India where education in the Christian Bible was compulsory for Hindu students. The middle classes accepted Western education with avidity and willingly studied Christian scriptures, but neither the dissolution of Hindu society so hopefully predicted nor the conversion of the intellectuals so devoutly hoped for showed any sign of materialization. On the other hand, Hinduism assimilated the new learning, and the effects were soon visible all over India in a revival of a universalistic religion based on the Vedanta."[16] The Grand Design on which "they had spent so much money and energy had failed".[17] The rise of Indian nationalism also had an adverse effect on missionary fortunes. The great leaders of the national movement such as Lokmanya Tilak, Sri Aurobindo and Lala Lajpat Rai were champions of resurgent Hinduism. "The Christian leaders in India themselves began to feel that too obvious a separation from their countrymen could not benefit them. Christianity began to show interest in Indian culture...[18]

---

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 290-91.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

Japan

Francis Xavier's vision was not confined to India. He was eying the whole of South East Asia and the Far East, China and Japan in particular. He had sailed to Malacca in Malaya in 1545 and then to Amboyna in Indonesia. While he was in Malacca again on his way back from Amboyna, he met a Japanese named Anjiro who was a fugitive from justice of his own country. "Anjiro gave him glowing accounts of the readiness of the people of Japan to receive the message of Christ." Xavier trained this Japanese criminal at the College of St. Paul in Goa and then set sail for Japan with him in 1549. He was encouraged by a provincial feudal lord but opposed by the Buddhist priests. He travelled to the Capital of Japan, Miyako, in the hope of converting the Emperor of Japan. But the Emperor refused to see him and he returned disheartened to Goa in 1551. "The opposition of Buddhist monks had dashed his hopes and ignorant as he was of Eastern religions, to him the Buddha was a demon under whose influence the Japanese people were living in monstrous sin. But he did not give up hope. He wrote to Ignatius Loyola to send more workers for Japan."[19]

---

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 242.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 249.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 295.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 282.

Limited Christian missionary work continued in Japan mainly in the western part of the Island. Japan at that time was divided into a number of principalities. "The feudal rulers of that part of Japan were anxious at that time to attract Portuguese vessels to the harbours mainly with the object of strengthening themselves against other feudal Lords. They realized instinctively the close connection between the foreign powers across the seas and the missionaries who had come to preach the new religion."[20] It was at this time that the great Japanese leader Oda Nobunaga started his career of conquest to unite Japan. He was being opposed by the powerful Buddhist monasteries. "The Jesuits saw a chance of interesting him in their mission to the disadvantage of the Buddhist church. Nobunaga encouraged them and in 1568 he invited the Catholic missionaries to Kyoto and even gave them land on which to build a church. Under his powerful protection the mission made unexpected progress."[21]

Hideyoshi who succeeded Nobunaga was also favourably inclined towards the missionaries. "But he was a keen-eyed observer. He noticed that the Portuguese had landed artillery to protect the area in which Christians lived. On a visit to a Portuguese vessel to see Father Coelho, he observed that the ship, though small, was heavily armed. He was also aware of the interest that the western daimyos were manifesting in the arms and equipment of the Portuguese and of their attempts to strengthen themselves by friendship with foreigners. Hideyoshi acted with firmness and in 1587 the activities of the missionaries were prohibited throughout the length and breadth of Japan." By now the Spaniards had conquered the Philippines and were negotiating a commercial treaty with Japan. "The commander of a Spanish galleon which was driven ashore spoke of Spanish power and recounted to the local daimyo who had salvaged the vessel and claimed the cargo the glories and prowess of the

---

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 288.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 289.

Conquistadores in a boastful manner. Hideyoshi's suspicious mind, already aware of Portuguese action in the East, ordered the arrest of all Spaniards in the country and had them crucified in Nagasaki as spies."[22]

The Japanese had collected considerable intelligence about the doings of the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Spaniards and the British in the islands of the Pacific. They had also realized that the converts in Japan sympathised with and looked for support to the foreigners. So they put down with a strong hand efforts to convert more Japanese to a creed which was heaping abuse on the gods of Japan. "The local Christian community continued to exist as a minor and obscure sect subject to intermittent persecution mainly because of its affiliations with foreigners. However, in 1614 Iyeasu, the Tokugawa Shogun, made it clear that Christian teachings were no longer to be tolerated and an edict banning the religion was issued that year."[23] At the same time, the Japanese sent a special spy to the southern regions to report on the activities of the Europeans there. Information about a Spanish plan to invade Japan reached them in 1622. Then came the Christian rebellion in Japan in 1637. "It took a considerable army and a costly campaign to put down the revolt which was said to have received support from the Portuguese. The reaction of the Shogunate was sharp and decisive... the firm policy of eliminating the converts was put into effect and a few years later the country was closed to the Westerners."[24]

Japan remained closed to Christian missions till 1889 when the policy was revised under the Meiji Restoration. The Japanese remained suspicious about Christian missionaries but as the new Constitution included a clause about complete religious toleration, the doors were opened to foreign missions. By that time, however, both Shintoism and Buddhism had revived in Japan and Christianity continued to be looked down upon by the mainstream Japanese as an evil sect. "Finally the educational system in Japan was under national control and Christian teachings were suspected to be in conflict with the tradition of state dominance enjoined by Shintoism."[25]

---

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 242.
[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 67 and 289.
[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

China

It was in China that Christian missions achieved their greatest success as well as met their greatest failure. Backed by the gangsterism of European powers, particularly Britain and France, the missions spread their tentacles far and wide, shattered the political, social and cultural fabric of China, and prepared the way for Communist take-over after the Second World War.

There were a large number of Chinese in Malacca when the Portuguese captured this place in 1511. It was from these Chinese that the Portuguese heard of the vast riches of China. They started sending commercial embassies to China. But the real purpose of these embassies was to spy and gather intelligence; they were planning invasion and conquest. A Portuguese embassy under Thomas Pires was sent to Peking and the Chinese Emperor showed readiness to receive it. But Simon d'Antrade who had accompanied Pires landed a party of Portuguese on the Chinese land and started building a fort. "The Chinese fleet attacked him and he was driven out. When news of Simon d'Antrade's piracies reached Peking, the Chinese Government naturally refused to receive the ambassador who was sent back to Canton where he died in prison in 1523."[26] Francis Xavier had also cast covetous eyes on China after his return from Japan. "He set out for China. But waiting for a ship on a little island off the Kwantung coast the indomitable old man died (1552)."[27]

On the other hand, unofficial trade between the Portuguese and some Chinese on the coastal areas was proving profitable to both parties. A Portuguese ship helped a Chinese admiral who was chasing pirates, and the Portuguese had given rich presents to the local governor of Chuang Chao and Ningpo. So the viceroy allowed the Portuguese to establish a trading post on the small deserted promontory of Macao in 1557.[28] In 1565 the Jesuits built a residence in Macao and Christian missionaries started arriving. By now the missionaries had evolved a new policy. They tried to be of special service to high Chinese officials and use their patronage for propagating Christianity. Matteo Ricci reached Macao in 1582 and travelled to the Chinese Capital at Peking in 1595 He gained the favour of the Court by presenting chiming clocks, other scientific toys and by showing his skill in mathematics. At that time a conflict had arisen in China between Buddhism and Confucianism. Seeing that the Court was inclined towards Confucianism, he sided with this creed. "He quoted from the Confucian texts in support of the Christian doctrines and tried to show that Confucian doctrines did not conflict with Christianity."[29]

---

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 293.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 282-83.

The Jesuits who followed Ricci served the Ming Emperors as astrologers and gun manufacturers, which activities brought them patronage but in no way promoted Christianity. Adam Schall who had succeeded Ricci in 1630 "was nominated Vice-President of the Imperial Sacrifice, the Superintendent of the Imperial Stud and High Honourable Bearer of the Imperial Banquet — strange posts for a Christian priest to hold."[30] The mission at Peking was closed after the Ming dynasty was overthrown by the Manchus and Schall was jailed. He died in 1666. But another Jesuit, Ferdinand Verbiest, succeeded in winning the favour of the Manchu King, Kang Hsi, who needed the Jesuit's skill for manufacturing cannon for suppressing a rebellion. The new king permitted the missionaries to preach their religion. Verbiest appealed to the king of France to send missionaries to China from the newly established (1664)

---

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 283.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 286.

Congregation de Missions Estrangeres in Paris, and six French priests left for the Far East in 1685. One of these French fathers, Gerbillion, was "a brilliant linguist who rendered valuable service to the Chinese Government during the Sino-Russian border disputes which led to the Treaty of Nertchinsk (1689). As a reward for his ability and tact an 'Edict of Tolerance' was issued by the Emperor (1692) which declared that the doctrines taught by the Europeans in charge of Astronomy and the Tribunal of Mathematics, 'are not evil' and permitted people 'to go to the churches freely to worship God'."[31]

But the Jesuits had gone too far in compromising the Christian doctrines and rites. They were practising astrology for the Chinese Court. "The head of the Jesuit mission as the Honourable Bearer of Dishes at the Imperial Banquet, or as the President of the Rites was not likely to find favour either in Rome or in Paris, and this was the problem that was raised at the Vatican itself, by the Dominicans,"[32] The Pope sent to China the Vicar General who gave a decision against the Jesuits. The Jesuits appealed to the Chinese Emperor for declaring that the Chinese rites were not in conflict with the Christian practices. The Emperor confirmed the Jesuit position, which was resented by the Pope. He sent a Legate for further enquiry. The Legate prohibited the Jesuit practices. The Emperor sent the Legate to jail where he died in 1710. On the other hand, a Papal Bull was issued against missionaries in China practising any Chinese rites. "In 1724, the preaching of the Christian religion was officially suppressed and the foreign missionaries, except those employed at the Court, were deported to Canton. Thus came to an end the grandiose scheme of the Jesuits in China."[33]

Christian missions entered China in a big way with the arrival of Britain, France and the U.S.A. on the scene in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Opium trade which was forced on China by the British East India Company led to the Opium

---

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 286-87.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 287.
[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 287-88.

Wars, defeat of China, and acquisition of extra-territorial rights by the various Western powers. Christian missions gained the right to operate not only in the extra-territorial enclaves but all over China. They also shared the indemnities exacted from China in the aftermath of various wars. All sorts of questionable characters became converts to Christianity and sought the protection of imperialist powers. "Christianity in China was involved with the Taiping rebellion... Protected by foreign authority these converts looked down upon the Chinese and took up an aggressive attitude towards them..." The Christian missionaries created mischief everywhere but were protected by the consuls of foreign powers.[34]

"But there was not a single province or area during all this time where the common man, as well as the mandarin, did not make it clear that the missionary was an unwelcome intruder... Not a single year passed without violent manifestations in some town or other against missionary activity. The Boxer rebellion could only be understood against this background. It was the missionary and the 'secondary devil', the native convert, who were the special objects of the Boxer's fury. Indeed the Chinese Christians had to pay dearly for being 'secondary devils' suspected to be supporters of foreign aggressors."[35]

One particular incident in the history of Christianity in China deserves special notice. The French had built a cathedral on the site of a Chinese temple in Tientsin. An orphanage was also established by Catholic nuns. "These sisters arranged for the payment of a sum for every child brought to the orphanage, that is, in plain words established a kind of purchase system, encouraging the less scrupulous Chinese middlemen to kidnap children... Naturally, the Chinese public was greatly agitated by the procedure."[36] The matter was represented to the Imperial Commissioner who took it up with the French consul. The consul resisted enquiry by a committee of the Chinese and fired at the mob which had collected outside the orphanage. The consul was murdered and the Cathedral as well as the orphanage was destroyed. The French threatened war and were supported by the British, the Americans, the Russians and the Italians. The situation was saved by the Franco-Prussian war in Europe in which the French were defeated.[37]

---

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 291-92.

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 292-93.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 138.

The Boxer War gave an opportunity to the Christian missions to acquire monopoly over education in China. The Treaty that followed "provided for the suspension of official examinations for five years in towns where foreigners had been molested — a device meant to give a chance to the missionary educated young men and Christians to be employed in service..."[38] In the next ten years the missionaries established a monopoly over education in China. Missionary education in turn created spiritual chaos. Instead of a Chinese renaissance based on Confucianism or Buddhism what followed was a basically anti-religious movement — the Chinese New Tide which paved the way for "penetration of revolutionary ideas of Marxism". The leader of the New Tide, Chen. Tu-hsiu, became in due course the founder of the original Communist Party of China.[39]

Christian hopes in China revived when Sun Yat-sen, a Christian, emerged as the leader of the Chinese Republic after the overthrow of the Manchus in 1911. "But he showed that he was more interested in the greatness and welfare of China than in the promotion of Christianity. The disappointment which Sun Yat-sen felt at the attitude of the Christian powers of the West and the influence which the October Revolution in Russia exercised on him led him away further and further from the missionaries to whom he had at one time looked for support. Moreover, the rising tide of nationalism, against unequal treaties and against imperialism, was unfavourable to Christianity The Anti-Christian Federation founded in Shanghai in 1922 asserted that Christianity was an ally of capitalism and imperialism and thus an instrument for oppression of weaker nations."[40]

---

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 138-39.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 150-51, 254, 259, 267.

Seventy years of sustained missionary effort for Christianizing China had inflicted great damage on Chinese society and culture. The missionaries had also helped the Western powers in destroying the political system of China. "Anarchical conditions in China were expected to be favourable to missionary hopes. Anarchical conditions did come about in Chinese society, but the beneficiaries were others."[41]

Indo-China

Christian missionary intrusion in Indo-China started with the activities of Alexander de Rhodes, a Jesuist who started work among Japanese Christian refugees (1662-27). But his success was not significant. His appeal to the Pope for support bore no fruit. The newly established Mission Estrangeres in France (1659), however, provided help. "Some businessmen in Rouen had established a society for the double purpose of trade and religion. It was in their ship that Bishop Lambert, selected by Father Alexander de Rhodes for the mission, reached Tongking in the guise of a merchant (1662). The Trinh monarchs of Tongking however showed no desire to welcome missionary activity... The Dutch soon succeeded in destroying the French factory at Tongking, and the local people remained indifferent to the new religion. So there was nothing to report for nearly a century." It was only in 1765 that Pigneau de Behaine of the Mission Estrangeres arrived in Cochin China. The Nguen King of Hue was in exile at this time. Behaine fitted out an expedition and restored him to his throne. But Behaine died soon after (1779). Meanwhile, the Revolution had broken out in France and the mission could expect no help from the mother country. By the time of the Bourbon restoration in France "the new

---

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 296.
[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 296-97.

Emperor of Annam, Minh Mang, had become very hostile to Christian activity. In 1848 Emperor Tu-Duc declared the religion of Jesus to be a 'perverse religion' and ordered ministers of this religion to be thrown into the sea."[42]

Tu-Duc's hostility to Christianity provided an excuse to Napoleon III of France. He decided to use force. In a communique published on 14 November 1858, he announced that "ruthless persecutions of our missionaries have brought our warships on more than one than occasion to the coast of the Annamite Kingdom". The Spaniards in the Philippines came out in support of the French expedition, "the commander-in-chief emphasizing the necessity 'to avenge the insults to our sacred religion and our pious missionaries'."[43]

The struggle between Tu-Duc and the French continued for fifteen years. The Annamite King appealed to China for help and the French suffered a defeat. But the relief was temporary. In the end Tu-Duc had to come to terms with France. He signed a treaty in 1874 ceding Cochin China to France and opening the Red River to French commerce. "This treaty... brought into existence the political structure of Indo-China with its separate areas of Cochin China, the Empire of Annam, the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Principality of Laos."[44]

The cultural resistance offered by Buddhism and Confucianism in Cambodia, Laos and Annam proved to be weak and not very widespread. The missionaries had a field day. The social system showed signs of breakdown everywhere. Nor was there a strong national movement in this region till after the First World War. "When that movement started, the Russian Revolution had already become a major factor in Eastern Asia, and therefore from the beginning the new nationalism of Indo-China had a Marxist bias, which later developed into Communist leadership."[45]

---

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 294.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 163.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 273-74.

Siam (Thailand)

Siam was able to resist Western pressures for unequal treaties till 1855 when the changed position in China and the British annexation of a part of Burma persuaded her to negotiate with Britain. "Sir John Bowring, who negotiated the treaty of 1855, was able to secure the principle of extra-territoriality for British subjects, permission to build churches and *exemption of all duty for import of opium*."[46] France also found pretexts for using strong arm methods and acquired some sort of extraterritorial rights for all her Asian subjects by a treaty signed in 1893. But rivalry between France and Britain enabled Siam to maintain her independence as a buffer state. The greatest factor which came to the rescue of Siam, however, was a succession of strong and able kings who introduced reforms and revived native culture.[47] Missionary activity had but little impact on the people in Siam due to the strength and vitality of the Buddhist Church. "The monarch of Siam assumed the title of the Defender of the Buddhist Faith in imitation of the British King's title. The conservative but generally enlightened policy followed by the monarchy during the critical period between 1870 and 1920 had the effect of getting Siam through the transition without violent tumult and a disorganization of society, so that in the period following the First [World] War she was enabled to recover her national independence in full by the gradual abolition, through negotiations, of the rights of extraterritoriality which the foreign nations possessed."[48]

Burma

Burma after its annexation by the British remained a part of India till 1937 so that the rise of Indian nationalism had a strong impact on Burmese nationalism. Though Buddhism had ceased to be the state religion of Burma after its annexation, its influence amongst the people was not seriously affected. Nationalist leaders in Burma had to profess to be devout Buddhists to gain popular support. "An instance of this was the case of Dr. Ba Maw, who was baptized as a Christian in his childhood; when he had become a prominent national figure, he declared that he had returned to the mother (Buddhist) church."[49] Missionary activity in Burma was able to affect neither its social structure nor its religion except among the Karens, the backward tribals. "There was thus considerable missionary sympathy for Karen separatism — a movement which was at one stage a major threat to the cause of Burmese independence."[50]

---

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 171. Emphasis in source..

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 172-73.

[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 272-73.

Missionary Response to Panikkar

The message that Panikkar had tried to convey to Asians in general and to his own countrymen in particular was that the history of Christianity surveyed by him was a running commentary on the imperialist character of the Christian doctrine. But the Brown Sahibs who had taken over from the British — the politicians and the intellectuals elite in India — failed to grasp his message and ignored his monumental study altogether. On the other hand, the missionaries were up in arms against him. "To prove his point," they said, "Panikkar picks and chooses historical facts and then deals with them one-sidedly." But none of them came out with facts which could redeem or even counterbalance those presented by Panikkar. Efforts to explain them away or put another interpretation on them, also remained a poor exercise. Fr. Jerome D'Souza had jibed, "A very fine narrative Mr. Panikkar, but you must not call it history."[51] But he or his missionary colleagues never bothered to tell what was that history which Panikkar had not taken into account. Subsequent Christian writings show that the missionaries have never been able to stop smarting from the hurt caused by Panikkar's book. They have also learnt a lesson, namely, that the Christian doctrine has to be salvaged from the history it had created. By now there is a plethora of Christian literature which bemoans the "colonial handicap" which has stood in the way of Jesus scoring over Rama and Krishna and the Buddha. And there has been a determined and sustained effort to present to the Indian people what Stanley Jones has named as the "disentangled Christ".

---

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 294-95.

[51] Felix Alfred Plattner, *The Catholic Church in India: Yesterday and Today*, Allahabad, 1964, p. 14.

THE NIYOGI COMMITTEE

The appointment of the Committee was announced on April 16, 1954 by a press note of the Government of Madhya Pradesh which said, "Representations have been made to Government from time to time that Christian Missionaries either forcibly or through fraud and temptations of monetary and other gain convert illiterate aboriginals and other backward people thereby offending the feelings of non-Christians. It has further been represented that Missions are utilised directly or indirectly for purposes of extra-religious objectives. The Christian Missionaries have repudiated these allegations and have asserted on the other hand that their activities are confined solely to religious propaganda and towards social, medical and educational work. The Missionaries have further alleged that they are being harassed by non-Christian people and local officials. As agitation has been growing on either side, the State Government consider it desirable in the public interest to have a thorough inquiry made into the whole question through an impartial Committee."[52]

The Government of Madhya Pradesh had to take notice of the agitation worked up by Christian missionaries. It had already led to violence in the adjoining States merged with Orissa. The missionaries had become too powerful in Madhya Pradesh to be ignored any longer. "It must be noticed," recorded the Committee, "that about 30 different Missions are working in Madhya Pradesh with varying number of centres in each district. Almost the entire Madhya Pradesh is covered by Missionary activities and there is hardly any district where a Mission of one denomination or the other is not operating in some form or the other. More than half the people of Madhya Pradesh (57.4 percent) consist of members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes and it is amongst these that Missionary activities are mostly confined."[53]

---

[52] *Report of the Christian Missionaries Enquiry Committee Madhya Pradesh*, Nagpur, 1956, Volume I, Appendix II.

The Committee had seven members including the Chairman, Dr. Bhawani Shankar Niyogi, retired Chief Justice of the Nagpur High Court. Mr. K.C. George, a professor in the Commerce College at Wardha, represented the Christian community. It started by studying the material in government files. As a result it was led to enlarge its terms of reference to include political and extra-religious activities also. "The material gathered in the initial stages of the enquiry revealed to the Committee that its significance far transcended the bounds of any one country or region in the world and that it was calculated to have worldwide repercussions. That compelled the Committee to view the subject as an integral part of a larger picture on the broad canvas of world history. The Committee had to consult a number of published books, pamphlets and periodicals for determining the nature and form of their recommendations."[54]

The terms of reference enabled the Committee to evolve a Questionnaire which was sent to such individuals and organisations as could help in the investigation. It received 385 replies to the Questionnaire, 55 from Christians and 330 from non-Christians. Besides, the Committee toured 14 districts in which it visited 77 centres, contacted 11,360 persons, and received 375 written statements. Hospitals, schools, churches, leper homes, hostels, etc., maintained by various missions were among the Christian institutions visited by the Committee. The persons interviewed came from 700 villages.

---

[53] *Ibid.*, Part I, p. 23.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

"In all these places," recorded the Committee, "there was unanimity as regards the excellent service rendered by the Missionaries in the fields of education and medical relief. But on the other hand there was a general complaint from the non-Christian side that the schools and hospitals were being used as means of securing converts. There was no disparagement of Christianity or of Jesus Christ, and no objection to the preaching of Christianity and even to conversions to Christianity. The objection was to the illegitimate methods alleged to be adopted by the Missionaries for this purpose, such as offering allurements of free education and other facilities to children attending their schools, adding some Christian names to their original Indian names, marriages with Christian girls, money-lending, distributing Christian literature in hospitals and offering prayers in the wards of indoor patients. Reference was also made to the practice of the Roman Catholic priests or preachers visiting newborn babies to give 'ashish' (blessings) in the name of Jesus, taking sides in litigation or domestic quarrels, kidnapping of minor children and abduction of women, and recruitment of labour for plantations in Assam or Andaman as a means of propagating the Christian faith among the ignorant and illiterate people. There was a general tendency to suspect some ulterior political or extra-religious motive in the influx of foreign money for evangelistic work in its varied forms. The concentration of Missionary enterprise on the hill tribes in remote and inaccessible parts of the forest areas and their mass conversion with the aid of foreign money were interpreted as intended to prepare the ground for a separate independent State on the lines of Pakistan."[55]

---

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

To start with, Christian missions put up a show of co-operation with the Committee. But they realized very soon that the Committee was well-informed and meant business. "The authorities and members of the Roman Catholic Church cooperated with the Committee in their exploratory tours in Raigarh, Surguja, Bilaspur, Raipur and Nimar districts. Shri G. X. Francis, President of the Catholic Regional Council, and Shri P. Lobo, Advocate, High Court, Nagpur, associated themselves with the Committee. But subsequently the Catholic Church withdrew its co-operation, not only filing statement of protest, but also moving the High Court for a Mandamus Petition (Miscellaneous Petition No. 263 of 1955)."[56]

The Petition was dismissed by the High Court on April 12, 1956, "holding that it was within the competence of the State Government to appoint a fact-finding Committee to collect information and that there had been no infringement of any fundamental rights of the petitioner." At the same time the High Court made some adverse remarks about certain questions in the Questionnaire. The Committee considered the remarks and "informed the petitioner and the public that none of the questions represented either the views of the Committee or any individual member thereof and our anxiety to have information on various points was due to our desire to find out to what extent, if any, could any activity be considered to infringe the limits of public order, morality and health imposed by the Constitution."[57]

The Report of the Committee, published in July 1956, presented the "history of Christian missions with special reference to the old Madhya Pradesh and Merged States."[58] Coming to the agitation for Jharkhand, it gave the background. "The separatist tendency," it said, "that has gripped the mind of the aboriginals under the influence of the Lutheran and Roman

---

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[57] *Ibid.*

[58] *Ibid.* Part II, Chapter II.

Catholic Missions is entirely due to the consistent policy pursued by the British Government and the Missionaries. The final segregation of the aborigines in the Census of 1931 from the main body of the Hindus considered along with the recommendations of the Simon Commission which were incorporated in the Government of India Act, 1935 apparently set the stage for the demand of a separate State of Jharkhand on the lines of Pakistan."[59]

The subsequent formation of the Adiwasi Mahasabha and the Jharkhand Party followed in stages as the separatist forces gathered strength. "This attempt of the Adiwasis," observed the Report, "initiated by the Christian section thereof is a feature which is common to the developments in Burma, Assam and Indo-China among the Karens, Nagas and Amboynes. This is attributed to the spirit of religious nationalism awakened among the converted Christians as among the followers of other religions. But the idea of change of religion as bringing about change of nationality appears to have originated in the Missionary circles... Thus while the Census officer isolates certain sections of the people from the main bodies, the Missionaries by converting them give them a separate nationality so that they may demand a separate State for themselves."[60]

Next, the Report considered "Christian postwar world policy,"[61] and quoted from several Christian sources. The aim of this policy in India was threefold: "(1) to resist the progress of national unity... (2) to emphasise the difference in the attitude towards the principle of coexistence between India and America... (3) to take advantage of the freedom accorded by the Constitution of India to the propagation of religion, and to create a Christian party in the Indian democracy on lines of the Muslim League ultimately to make out a claim for a separate State, or at least to create a 'militant minority'."[62]

---

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[60] *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

[61] *Ibid.*, Part II, Chapter III.

[62] *Ibid.* pp. 59-60.

The newly adopted Constitution of India, according to the Committee, had encouraged the controllers of Christian missions in Europe and America to concentrate on India. "Although Europe itself," observed the Report, "required 're-Evangelisation and re-Christianisation' because of the spread of the Gospel of Communism according to Marx, the W.C.C.[63] and I.M.C.[64] *turned their attention to India* and other colonial countries. They were encouraged by the promulgation of our Constitution which set up a secular State with liberty to propagate any religion in the country. They noted that the Churches in India were growing steadily in number partly by natural increase, partly from evangelisation and that the mass or community movements to Christianity did not die out though slowed down, but that the spiritual life of the congregation was low and that the Indian Church lacked economic maturity. Though India has the most highly organised *National Christian Council* it had to be largely *paid for from abroad*. Even the institutional activities of Missions, viz., schools, colleges and hospitals were dependent upon *foreign support*. Even the ordinary congregational life and pastoral duty still required some form of foreign aid."[65]

The Report surveyed the state of religious liberty in various countries in the past and at present. It cited High Court judgements in India to the effect that religious liberty is "not an absolute protection to be interpreted and applied independently of other provisions of the Constitution."[66] Then it turned to "missionary activities in Madhya Pradesh since independence as disclosed by oral and documentary evidence."[67] This was the most substantial as well as the most revealing part of the Report. It laid bare what the Christian Missions had been doing not only in Madhya Pradesh but all over India in the name of exercising religious liberty.

---

[63] World Christian Council.

[64] International Missionary Council.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 54. Emphasis in source.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[67] *Ibid.*, Part III, pp. 95-129.

There was a detailed account of "how this programme of mass proselytisation was inspired and financed by foreigners"[68] and how the paid *pracharaks* of various missions had fanned out in the rural and tribal areas. The *pracharaks* were particularly noticeable in the erstwhile Native States which had kept missionary operations under control before their merger in Madhya Pradesh. "It is thus indisputably clear," recorded the Report, "that financial assistance from abroad had been extended in far more liberal manner than even before the Constitution of India was promulgated, and that it is mainly with this help that Mission organisations are carrying on proselytisation amongst backward tribes, especially in areas freshly opened."[69]

This greatly extended scale of missionary operations was dressed up ideologically in a new theological concept. "It may be recalled," commented the Report, "that the expression 'Partnership in Obedience' came into vogue at the meeting of the Committee of the International Missionary Council held at Whitby in 1947 (page 94, World Christian Handbook, 1952) and it has a bearing on the expression 'need of particular churches to be rooted in the soil and yet supranational in their witness and obedience' (page 29, ibid.). These particular churches are in the old Mission fields 'which are touched by new nationalisms independent in temper and organisation and yet needing help from other churches' (page 29, ibid.). The expression 'Partnership in Obedience' was being interpreted variously and it was after discussion at a meeting of the Lutheran World Federation Executive and also of the Executive of the World Council of Churches held at Geneva in 1951, that it came to be interpreted as implying full and unreserved co-operation between the old and the younger churches in the effort of extending the Kingdom of God."[70] In plain language, the pompous proclamation meant that missions and churches in Europe and America which provided the finance would continue to plan, direct and control missionary activities in India.

---

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
[69] *Ibid.*, p. 102.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 100.

The Report quoted Christian sources to show the extent to which Christianity in India was dependent on foreign finance. Rolland Allan had written in his book, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, published in 1949, that "it is money, money everywhere, all the time, everything depends on money". In another book, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Our's*, published by the same author in 1953, he had felt "sad to sit and watch a stream of Christian visitors calling upon a Missionary and to observe that in nearly every case the cause which brings them is money". *Christianity in the Indian Crucible* by Dr. E. Asirvatham had been published in 1955. "One chief reason," he had observed, "why Indian Christians in general still welcome foreign Missionaries is economy; it is an open secret that the Indian Church is not yet out of the swaddling clothes, so far as its economic support is concerned. To give an extreme illustration only Rs. 6,000 of the total income of Rs. 1,12,500 of the National Christian Council of India... is from Indian sources and the rest comes from the Mission Boards abroad."[71] It was curious that Christianity was presented as a two thousand years old banyan tree when it came to its right to spread its tentacles, and as a tender seedling when it came to its capacity for growing up on its own!

The Report provided details of how much had been contributed by which Western country to the total of Rs. 29.27 crores received by Christian missions in India from January 1950 to June 1954:

---

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

Country	*Amount in Rs.*
U.S.A.	20,68,63,000
U.K.	4,83,89,000
Canada	1,67,56,000
Sweden	64,41,000
Denmark	33,91,000
Norway	27,97,000
Rest of Sterling Area	25,29,000
Switzerland	15,77,000
Aid from non-Sterling Area	14,72,000
Germany	11,72,000
France	7,61,000
Belgium	6,47,000
	2,90,27,000[72]

The Report revealed that the bulk of this foreign money received ostensibly for maintaining 'educational and medical institutions' was spent on proselytization. "It has been contended," said the Report, "that most of the amount is utilised for creating a class of professional proselytisers, both foreign as well as Indian. We have not been able to get the figures of the salaries which the foreign Missionaries receive for their service in India. Only Rev. Hartman (Amravati No.1) was pleased to declare that his salary was 63 dollars per month paid from Rome, plus free quarters and vehicle allowance. One can have some idea of the scale of salaries of American Missionaries from the fact that in the American Evangelical and Reformed Church there are 28 Missionaries on the India roll and under the head of Missionary salaries and appurtenances the figure comes to 90,072,23 dollars (American Evangelistic and Reformed Church Blue Book, 1955, pages 56,60). They are supplied with well-furnished bungalows, and they command resources in vehicles and other things."[73] At the same time it noted a great disparity between the scales of salaries and allowances paid to foreign missionaries on the one hand and to their native mercenaries on the other.

---

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

There were 480 foreign missionaries working in Madhya Pradesh at that time. Out of them as many as 236 were Americans. The Report gave a count of foreign missionaries, Americans and others, stationed in the 22 districts of the then Madhya Pradesh. "Besides those," it added, "included in the number given by the National Christian Council in the Christian Handbook of India 1954-55, it appears from the statement of Rev. R.C. Das that there is a large number of unattached evangelists. Rev. Das's statement receives support from the remark made in the Compiler's introduction to the Christian Hand-Book of India 1954-55 that the increased personnel has occurred in the smaller Missions most of which do not yet have any organised Churches."[74]

The methods of proselytisation had remained the same as in days of old. The Report gave concrete instances of how mission schools were used to influence the minds of young people. Harijan and 'Adivasi' students came in for special attention. They were "given free boarding, lodging and books" provided they attended Christian prayers. Bible classes were made compulsory by treating as absent for the whole day those students who failed to be present in those classes. School celebrations were used for showing the victory of the cross over all other symbols. Hospitals were used for putting pressure on poor class patients to embrace Christianity. The richest harvest, however, was reaped in mission orphanages which collected orphans during famines and other natural calamities such as floods and earthquakes. "No wonder," observed the Report, "that the largest number of converts are from such backward classes living in areas where due to various causes only Mission schools and hospitals exist. Most conversions have been doubtless insincere admittedly brought about in expectation of social service benefits and other material considerations."[75]

---

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 103.
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Another device employed for proselytisation was money-lending. Roman Catholic missions had specialised in this field. Poor people often approached the local missionary for loans which were written off if the debtor became a convert; otherwise he had to repay it with interest which was often found difficult. Protestant missionaries and others cited before the Committee instances of how this method worked. One of the conditions for getting a loan, for instance, was that the recipient agreed to chop off the topknot (*choti*), the symbol of his being a Hindu. "Some of the people," the Report noted, "who had received loans were minors and casual labourers. It also appeared that when one member of a family had taken a loan, all the other members of that family were entered in the book as potential converts. The rate of interest charged was 10 per cent and in a large number of cases examined, one year's interest was deducted in advance. On being questioned, the people without any hesitation, said that their only purpose in going to the Mission had been to get money; and all said that without the lure of money none would have sought to become Christian."[76] Some other allurements such as the "promise of gift of salt, plough, bullocks and even milk powder received from abroad" were used to the same effect.[77]

There were several other ways of attracting converts. For instance, the new converts were employed as *pracharaks* on salaries ranging from Rs. 40/- to Rs. 100/- per month. This by itself proved an attractive proposition to those who were not in a position or qualified to earn even Rs. 20/-. Christians working in various government departments were exhorted and expected to participate in the game. Those who did not help were cursed in missionary publications. Christians placed in higher positions and missionaries who became influential members of the Janapad Sabhas put pressure on junior officers for influencing people in favour of Christianity.

---

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 115.

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 116.

The Report also noted "various methods of propagating Christianity."[78] Missionary publications "attacked idol worship in rather offensive terms." Dramas in which idol worship was ridiculed were performed in schools and elsewhere. Songs to the same effect were composed and sung. Rama was "described as a God who destroyed Ravan and was contrasted with Jesus who died for the wicked." Methods evolved for conveying Christianity in Hindu cultural forms were also in evidence. Some of them were plainly dishonest, as for instance, "the expression occurring in Tulsidas's *Ramayan*, viz. 'Girjapujan' was interpreted to the people as 'Girjaghar' i.e., a Church."[79] But, on the whole, preference was given to vicious attacks on Hinduism, which was held up as a false religion. "Such virulent and sinister attacks on Hinduism," observed the Report, "are in no way a departure from the manner which characterised the Christian preaching in the past, which Gandhiji referred to, particularly Bishop Heber's famous hymn, 'where every prospect pleases and only man is vile'."[80]

The Report contained a section on Mass Conversions brought about by material inducements. "If conversion is an individual act," it noted, "one would expect deep thought and study of the particular religion one wanted to embrace. But what we have found is groups of illiterate Adivasis, with families and children getting their topknots cut and being shown as Christians. Most of them do not know even the rudiments of the new religion… The Government has supplied us with a list of persons recently converted in the Surguja district after the promulgation of the Constitution. A perusal thereof will show that about 4000 Uraons were converted in two years. Persons of varying ages from 60 years to 1 year are shown as converts and the list includes women and children also. We have met many Uraons in the course of our tours and we were struck very much by their total absence of religious feeling."[81]

---

[78] *Ibid.*, pp. 118-122.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

The Committee had "reliable information that Mission organisations possess upto-date records of Baptisms."[82] But they refused to produce these records. "It would not be unsafe," concluded the Report, "to presume that the reluctance on the part of the Roman Catholic Mission organisations to produce such evidence was in no small measure due to the fear of the Truth being out... As a rule, groups have been converted, and we find 'individual conversion' has been an exception rather than the rule. We have come across cases of individual conversions only of persons who are village leaders and they have invariably been followed by 'Mass conversions' of the entire village soon after. We have not found it possible to accept the contention that the immediate material prosperity of these converted leaders bore no causal relation to their conversions."[83]

The Report expressed the view that conversions led directly to denationalisation. Greetings such as 'Ram Ram' and 'Jai Hind' were substituted with 'Jai Yeshu'. "The idea of the unique Lordship of Christ," recorded the Report, "is propagated in rural areas by the exhibition of the film 'King of Kings', which we had the pleasure of witnessing at Buldana. The supremacy of the Christian flag over the National flag of India was also depicted in the drama which was staged in a school at Jabalpur."[84] The missionary paper, *Nishkalanka*, had written, "Why does India desire that Portugal which has been exercising sovereignty for 400 years over Goa should surrender it? The fact is that a large majority of residents of Goa are quite contented with their present condition. Only a handful of Goans resident in Goa and in India are shouting for the merger of Goa with India. This attitude is not justified and those who are following this course are giving unrighteous lead to India."[85] The missions thus sided with Western imperialism and pooh-poohed India's aspiration to reclaim national territory under foreign occupation.

---

[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 123.
[83] *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124.
[84] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

Finally, the Report found no substance in the Christian complaint that the Government of Madhya Pradesh was following a policy of discrimination against Christians. "The Government of Madhya Pradesh," it said, "have throughout followed a policy of absolute neutrality and non-interference in matters concerning religion and allegations of discrimination against Christians and harassment of them by Government officials have not been established. Such allegations have been part of the old established policy of the Missions to overawe local authority and to carry on propaganda in foreign countries."[86]

The Report was quite clear in its larger perceptions. "Evangelisation in India," it said, "appears to be part of the uniform world policy to revive Christendom for re-establishing Western supremacy and is not prompted by spiritual motives. The objective is to disrupt the solidarity of the non-Christian societies, and the mass conversion of a considerable section of Adivasis with this ulterior motive is fraught with danger to the security of the State."[87] The Christian missions were making a deliberate and determined "attempt to alienate Indian Christian Community from their nation."[88] The Community was most likely to become a victim of foreign manipulations in times of crisis.[89]

---

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

[86] *Ibid.*, Part IV, p. 132.

[87] *Ibid.*

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 144.

[89] *Ibid.*, pp. 145-148.

The history of the Christian missions provided ample proof that religion had been used for political purposes.[90] Evangelization was not a religious philosophy but a force for politicisation.[91] The Church in India was not independent but accountable to those who paid for its upkeep. The concept of 'Partnership in Obedience' which covered the flow of foreign finances to the Church was of a piece with the strategy of Subsidiary Alliances which the East India Company had employed earlier for furthering and consolidating its conquests.[92] And conversions were nothing but politics by other means.[93]

The recommendations made by the Report followed logically from these perceptions. It recommended that (1) those missionaries whose primary object is proselytisation should be asked to withdraw and the large influx of foreign missionaries should be checked; (2) the use of medical and other professional services as a direct means of making conversions should be prohibited by law; (3) attempts to convert by force or fraud or material inducements, or by taking advantage of a person's inexperience or confidence or spiritual weakness or thoughtlessness, or by penetrating into the religious conscience of persons for the purpose of consciously altering their faith, should be absolutely prohibited; (4) the Constitution of India should be amended in order to rule out propagation by foreigners and conversions by force, fraud and other illicit means; (5) legislative measures should be enacted for controlling conversion by illegal means; (6) rules relating to registration of doctors, nurses and other personnel employed in hospitals should be suitably amended to provide a condition against evangelistic activities during professional service; and (7) circulation of literature meant for religious propaganda without approval of the State Government should be prohibited.[94]

---

[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

[92] *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

[93] *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

[94] *Ibid.*, pp. 163-64.

Storm in Missionary Circles

The Report which was accompanied by two volumes of documentation raised a storm in missionary circles in India and abroad. The missions were in no position to dispute the facts presented or contest the conclusions arrived at by the Enquiry Committee. All they could do was to raise the spectre of 'Hindu communalism' and warn against the 'danger of Hindu Raj'. It was said that "members of Hindu Mahasabha had begun to wield considerable influence" in the Government of Madhya Pradesh and that "their aim was to make one Hindu state out of India."[95]

The fact of missions in India seeking financial and other aids from missions abroad was equated with the Government of India seeking "foreign technical knowledge and the assistance of friends from many European and American countries in the development of the nation-building activities." The replacement of foreign missionaries was found impossible as the Government of India had "found impossible to replace foreign person-nel with Indian personnel."[96] It was promised that "in the not distant future the coming of missionaries from abroad into India will be matched by the going out of Indian missionaries from this country."[97] The logic was quite in keeping with the way the Church in India had come to look at itself.

If this self-image of the Church as a State within the State looked pretentious to some people, it could be accounted for only by their tendency towards totalitarianism. "There is a striking contrast," wrote a leading theologian, M. M. Thomas, "between the democratic idea of the State and the totalitarian idea of the State which is both implicit and explicit in the Recommendations of the Niyogi Report... The philosophy of State underlying the Report and advocated by it is unashamedly totalitarian. It therefore is a matter of vital concern to every one in this country whether Christian or non-Christian who believes in democracy."[98] The test of a state being democratic was that it recognised and honoured "supranational loyalties". In support of his proposition Dr. Thomas quoted Mahatma Gandhi who had "recognized truth and non-violence as realities demanding loyalty above the nation," and President Soekarno of Indonesia who had "stated that Nationalism should be limited by Humanism".[99] Thus servility to foreign financiers and con-trollers of missions in India became transformed into loyalty to universal moral values! "In deploring this," concluded Dr. Thomas, "and characterising supranationalism as 'extra-territoriality', the Niyogi Report has shown the kinship of its ideology with totalitarian Facism."[100]

---

[95] Felix Alfred Plattner, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[96] *The National Christian Council Review*, October 1956, p. 403.

[97] *Ibid*. p. 405.

The missions also tried to rally support from some persons of public standing in India. Dr. Hare Krishna Mahtab, then Governor of Bombay, obliged them readily. "We should not think," he said, "of closing our doors to anyone. If we think in terms of exclusiveness, we shall not make any progress."[101] But they found a hard nut in C. Rajagopalachari. "It seems," he wrote to a foreign missionary, "you expect from me an expression of my views on the specific question: What type of missionary workers are wanted in India, rather than on the question whether any missionary workers should come at all to India? I shall respectfully speak my opinion on the latter point. I feel it is not really possible on the ground of logic or on the evidence of miracles to hold that amongst the religions known as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, anyone is nearer the truth than any other. You will permit me to object to the exclusive claims for Truth made on behalf of any one of these faiths. If this my first point is granted, the only justification for missionary work is proselytism. But is it good on the whole for men and women to change from one religion to another? I think it is not desirable to make any effort at proselytism. I feel that such efforts undermine the present faith of the people, which is good enough for promoting right conduct in them and to deter them from sin. They tend to destroy family and social harmony, which is not a good thing to do."[102]

---

[98] *Ibid.*, p. 395.

[99] *Ibid.*, pp. 395-96.

[100] *Ibid.*, pp. 396-97.

[101] *Ibid.*, p. 397.

Rajagopalachari was repeating the views expressed very often and very forcefully by Mahatma Gandhi. But the men who ran the Government in New Delhi could not afford to defend the Father of the Nation. They had to defend their Secularism and Democracy which had come under shadow in the powerful Christian press in India and abroad. They found the recommendations of the Niyogi Report "in discordance with the fundamental rights of the Constitution" and "the Report was shelved."[103]

The Government of India's stand vis-à-vis the Report became clear within two months after its publication. In September 1956, "a question was raised in the Parliament about an alleged increase in the anti-Indian activities on the part of foreign Christian missionaries." The Minister of State for Home Affairs, B. N. Datar, came promptly to their defence. "There is no factual basis," he said, "for the assumption made in the question, according to the information available with the Government of India." At the same time he affirmed that "no steps would be taken to check the work of foreign missionaries."[104]

OM PRAKASH TYAGI'S BILL

Om Prakash Tyagi was a Janata Party Member of Lok Sabha elected after the Emergency (1975-77) in 1977. On 2 December 1978, he introduced in the Lok Sabha Bill No. 178 of 1978 under the title THE FREEDOM OF RELIGION BILL, 1978 "*to provide for prohibition on conversion from one religion to*

---

[102] *Ibid.*, December 1956, p. 490.

[103] Felix Alfred Plattner, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

[104] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

another by use of force, or inducement or by fraudulent means and for matters incidental thereto". The Draft of the bill was dated "New Delhi, The 21st November, 1978".

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS in the Bill stated as follows:

> One of the Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Constitution is the right to profess, practice and propagate religion of one's choice.
>
> Conversion from one religion to another, done by free consent and will, cannot be questioned. But State protection is required where it is sought to be obtained by threat, undue influence, allurement or wrongful inducement. The importance of providing this protection to persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is all the more necessary and cannot be ignored. The policy of the State should be directed to achieve this aim.

The Bill had 8 sections of which the first two dealt with definitions. The other relevant sections were as under:

3. No person shall convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any person from one religious faith to another by the use of force or by inducement or by deceit or by any fraudulent means nor shall any person abet any such conversion.

4. Any person contravening the provision in section 3 shall without prejudice to any civil liability, be punishable with imprisonment of either description which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to three thousand rupees or both:

> Provided that in case the offence is committed in respect of a minor, woman or a person belonging to the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, the punishment shall be imprisonment to the extent of two years and a fine up to five thousand rupees.

5. An offence under this Act shall be cognisable and shall not be investigated by an officer below the rank of an Inspector of Police.

8. The Central Government may make rules for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this Act.

The Bill followed the pattern of Bills passed by the Congress Governments of Orissa (1967), Madhya Pradesh (1968) and Arunachal Pradesh (1977) following the recommendations of the Rege and Niyogi Committees to the effect that activities of foreign Christian missionaries in these States had to be restrained. Christian organizations had challenged in the Supreme Court the Orissa and Madhya Pradesh Acts as unconstitutional. But the Supreme Court had dismissed their appeal in 1977. Now the same organizations were up in arms once again.[105]

The first shot was fired by Mother Teresa in a letter she wrote to Prime Minister Morarji Desai on 25 March 1979. The text of the letter is not available to us. But its substance comes out in the reply which Desai wrote to her on 21 April 1979. She appears to have protested against the Bill as a hurdle in the way of charitable and philanthropic activities of the Christian missions. She seems to have pointed out at the same time that the Roman Catholics were always engaged in praying, fasts and celebration of sacrifices made in the interests of peace, communal amity and religious freedom. Desai wrote back, "If charity and philanthropy is not connected with any ulterior motive, they are beneficial. But charity and conversions cannot go together. Religion prospers only when charity and philanthropy are undertaken without any motive. The Bill you have mentioned does not affect adversely the propagation of religion. In fact, the Bill is an attempt to see that the poor and illiterate may enjoy religious freedom without any fear. We have to be particularly vigilant about the Scheduled Tribes whose protection is not only guaranteed by the laws of the land but is also enshrined in the Constitution. It is our duty to preserve every aspect of their way of life along with their religion and ways of worship. No group belonging to any creed should interfere with their religion and rituals. Other organizations are also engaged in the philanthropic work which you claim. But that work can be helpful only when it is done without any ulterior motive. It is my opinion that you should revise your attitude to O.P. Tyagi's Bill in the light of what I have stated."[106]

---

[105] What follows is taken from a Hindu booklet, *Dharma Svātantrya Vidheyaka Kyoṅ*, written and published by Raghunath Prasad Pathak, Delhi. The publication carries no date but seems to have been published after May of 1979. I have translated from Hindi.

Meanwhile, Morarji Desai had met 36 delegations in Pune on 31 March 1979 and received their memoranda in connection with the Bill. He explicitly rejected the plea of the Christian delegation that the Bill which provided for prohibition of conversions by force should be withdrawn. He told Father Valerian D'Souza who was leading the Christian delegation that he saw nothing objectionable in the Bill. At the same time he gave the assurance that he would study the Bill thoroughly and try to remove the misgivings felt by its opponents.

Another delegation which met him was from the Masur Ashram and the Patit Pavan. They demanded that the Bill be passed. Desai assured them that they (his Government) are in favour of the Bill and no one should have the apprehension that the Government would bend before any tactics of pressure. Kaka Joshi of Masur Ashram congratulated the Prime Minister for the courage he had shown in the matter of conversions. Joshi said that he was the first Prime Minister to adopt that attitude.[107]

Leading newspapers wrote editorials and published articles in support of the Bill. Two retired High Court Judges issued statements to the same effect. N. Krishnaswamy, former Judge of the Madras High court, declared on 13 April 1979 that "This Bill is timely and Christians are only exposing themselves by opposing it". Shiv Nath Katju, former Judge of the Allahabad High court, said on 29 April 1979: "The Bill should be passed immediately. In days to come it will prove beneficial to all minority groups including the Christians."[108]

---

[106] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[107] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Various Hindu organizations also passed resolutions endorsing the Bill. The Hyderabad session of the Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha held on 13 April 1979 appealed to all Sanatana Dharma Sabhas and organizations of Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists to hold meetings in support of the Bill and congratulate Prime Minister Morarji Desai for the firmness shown by him. The four Shankaracaryas held a joint meeting at Sringeri and passed a resolution in support of the Bill. Dr. Girdharilal Goswami, President of the Sanatana Dharma Maha Sammelan, issued a statement on 7 May 1979 saying that the Bill was in keeping with the secular policy as well as the Constitution of India, and that it will prove very helpful in stopping the large-scale conversion of Hindus by foreigners who were using material inducements as well as force for this purpose.[109]

Tyagi himself issued a statement in Hyderabad on 15 April 1979 stating that the Bill did not prevent anyone from propagating one's religion nor came in the way of anyone changing one's religion out of conviction. If any group opposed such a just measure, he said, it only showed that it was guilty of committing offences specified in the Bill. The only aim of the Bill, he added, was to protect the large number of socially and educationally poor people in such backward areas as the foreign missionaries had chosen for effecting conversions with the help of money and materials brought from abroad. He cited the instance of 31,000 bales of cloth which had been imported by missionaries for distribution among the poor people in Madras but which had been sold surreptitiously and the proceeds utilized for other purposes. The matter was under investigation, he said.[110]

The Hindu of Madras dated 29 April 1979 published detailed report of a Press Conference which Tyagi had held in New

---

[108] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[109] *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

[110] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5.

Delhi on 27 April 1979. After repeating the points he had made in his statement of 15 April 1979, he said that conversions by force naturally created tension between religious groups, and that such conversions had to be stopped in order to maintain communal amity and national unity. He added that it was only after religious tensions were brought to the notice of the Governments in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh that these Governments had felt obliged to enact Acts guaranteeing freedom of religion. The Supreme Court, he said, had judged these Acts as consistent with the Constitution. His statement was followed by a question and answer session. In answer to the first question he said that he was prepared to accept any amendment to the Bill provided it did not violate the spirit of the Bill. The Prime Minister Morarji Desai was in agreement with the intention of the Bill because he was opposed to conversions. The second question was whether he would welcome a national debate on the subject. Tyagi said he would welcome such a debate because he knew that all patriotic and intelligent people were in favour of the Bill, and that only those groups were opposed to it who were against national interests as well as their own long-term interests. His observation in answer to a third question was that foreign missionaries who were entrenched in backward areas and among backward people were bent upon exploiting the poverty of our people and that the Government could exercise no control on the flow of foreign funds nor supervise use of those funds. He added that ostensibly these funds were meant for opening schools but were actually used for some other purposes. The fourth question demanded evidence about the misuse of foreign funds and materials. Tyagi cited the Rege and Niyogi Committees' reports in this context. The fifth question asked was why Christians were opposed to the Bill. Tyagi's answer was that he knew it for definite that there was a foreign hand at the back of this opposition and that conversions were politically motivated. The spectre of Hindu Rashtra, he added, had been raised in order to frighten the minorities. He assured the minorities that there was no ground for their misgivings so far as propagation of religion and genuine conversions were concerned. The sixth question was regarding the need for concrete steps to remove the fear of the minorities. Tyagi cited the Acts in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh and wanted to know instances of their being misused. The fear felt by the minorities had no legs to stand upon. The seventh and the last question was whether the Bill would not harm the Janata Party by causing division in its ranks. Tyagi dismissed the question by saying that only power hungry and opportunist elements were talking about the harmful effect of the Bill in the Janata Party, and that the Bill should not be dropped due to fear of a temporary controversy if it was fundamentally a right step in the interest of the nation.[111]

It was, however, true that the Janata Party at this time was riven with sharp controversies, though not on account of Tyagi's Bill. It was also true that the Socialist group within the Janata Party led by George Fernandez was demanding that the Bill be withdrawn. The Communist Party of India could not miss the opportunity and raised the matter in the Lok Sabha. The CPI Member, Bhupesh Gupta, alleged on the floor of the House on 3 May 1979 that there was widespread resentment against the Bill among various communities and that it had actually led to large-scale rioting in Jammu and Kashmir. He pleaded that the Government should withdraw the Bill. H.M. Patel, Home Minister in the Janata Party Government, clarified that Tyagi's Bill was a Private Bill on which the Government had yet to make up its mind. He added that the Government could not withdraw a Private Bill. Regarding riots in Kashmir, Patel said that Tyagi's Bill had nothing to do with them and that they had been caused by the hanging of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in Pakistan.[112]

A few months later the Janata Party split and the Morarji Government had to resign. Tyagi's Bill could not even be discussed in the Parliament. It became infructuous. An opportunity for enacting an all-India legislation against conversions by force, fraudulent means and material inducements was missed.

---

[111] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-10.

[112] *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

ARUN SHOURIE

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), the highest body of the Catholic Church in India, was celebrating its 50th anniversary in January 1994. Arun Shourie, the noted scholar-journalist, was invited by the CBCI to give "Hindu assessment of the work of Christian missionaries" in a meeting held at the Ishvani Kendra Seminary at Pune on 5 January 1994. Many Archbishops, Bishops, senior clergy and Christian scholars from all over India were present. The meeting lasted for more than two hours. His talk was followed by a question and answer session. Everyone present seemed to be pleased and he was invited to write a paper on his talk so that it could be included in a volume containing the proceedings of anniversary celebration. He finished the paper pretty soon and sent it to the Secretary of the CBCI.

The CBCI had, however, used the occasion to review the work of the Catholic Church in India. The discussions were guided by two documents prepared in advance — 'Trends and Issues in Evangelization of India Based on the CBCI Survey Reports' and 'Paths in India Today: Our Common Search [submitted by] CBCI Commission for Proclamation and Communication Working Group'. Arun Shourie had received two sets of these documents — one which came to him in New Delhi along with the invitation for his lecture and another when he reached the venue of the meeting at Pune.

As he studied these documents, he felt that the paper he had sent to the CBCI had not done full justice to the subject. So he delved deeper into the theology of Christianity and its history in India, and studied a lot of primary material — the writings and speeches of important British administrators like

T.B. Macaulay, Charles Trevelyan and Richard Temple; works of outstanding scholar-missionaries such as Max Muller and Monier-Williams; evidence tendered by leading Christian missionaries in 1853 before a Select Committee of the British Parliament regarding prospects of Christianity in India and the responsibility of the Christian ruling power in that context; report of the Simon Commission published in 1930; reports of the Rege and Niyogi Committees regarding missionary activities in Madhya Bharat and Madhya Pradesh published in 1956, etc. At the same time he acquired an adequate knowledge of Hindu response to the missionary assault from the *Collected Works* of Mahatma Gandhi and the *Complete Works* of Swami Vivekananda. He also discovered that the earlier Hindu response had not only been silenced but actually reversed in the post-independence India so that India's intellectual elite had started speaking the missionary language vis-à-vis Hinduism with a vengeance in the name of Secularism. The result of this pains-taking research was a whole book —*Missionaries in India: Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas* — published from New Delhi in 1994.

The starting point of Shourie's review of Christianity was his grasp of the hoary Indian traditions which the Christian missionaries had chosen to calumniate and erase so that their own creed could be imposed on the people of this country. "The traditions of India," he wrote, "were rich as can be. They had attained insights of the first water... And they were inclusive. A person devoted to a tree was not traduced as an 'animist', a person devoted to a bull or an elephant, or a lion or a snake or even the lowly mouse was not laughed away. The objects of his devotion were received with reverence — they became parts of a pantheon... Nor was this artifice. The inclusiveness flowed from deep conviction, from what had been experienced at the deepest... But no one could impede reform by an appeal to 'fundamentals', for these, fundamentals made the individual's own experience the ultimate referrent. That everything should reform and transform, the tradition regarded as natural. Differences were harmonised through discourse..."[113]

"But all this," he continued, "the missionaries traduced. The inclusiveness they condemned as a sinister strategem to swallow up other religions. The efflorescence of different speculations they condemned as cacophony. The openness and tentativeness they condemned as intellectual flabbiness. The inner directed search they condemned as morbid self-denial. The offering of many ways they condemned as unsettled mush. The many gods they condemned as chaos. What had become the norm for Islam was made the norm for Christianity: freedom of speech meant the freedom to discover its glories... Asymmetry was the principle as in the case of Islam; conversion was held to be and acted upon as something that was an essential principle of Christianity; but when a person like Swami Shraddhananda argued in favour of taking back into the Hindu fold the converts who wanted to return, they were condemned as persons who were inventing a practice for which there was no warrant in Hinduism."[114]

Why do the missionaries speak as they do? Why do they fail to understand the richness of Indian traditions and appreciate its various dimensions? Shourie answers the question after reproducing a dialogue between Mahatma Gandhi and Professor Krzenski, a Professor of Philosophy from Poland, who maintained that Christianity was the only true religion. "For the position that Krzenski was articulating," observes Shourie, "is the standard position, it is the ineluctable position that every adherent of a revelatory, millenniast religion must take. The premises of such religions — of Christianity, of Islam, of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism — are that there is One Truth, that it has been revealed to One Man... that it has been enshrined by him or on his behalf in One Book... that the text is very difficult to grasp and therefore one must submit to and be guided by One (external, overarching) Agency... Now, as the Millenium shall come only when, but immediately when all accept the Revelation, it is the duty of the Agency... to see that everyone sees The Light. If, even after The Light has been shown to a person he refuses to subscribe to it, he must be put out of harm's way. For in that circumstance the man is not only harming himself, he is coming in the way of the Mandate of God, of Allah's Will, or as in Marxism, History... What must be done also follow inevitably from those premises: the Church must convert, Lenin and Mao must export the Revolution, Khomeini must export the Revelation. These are inescapable responsibilities."[115]

---

[113] Arun Shourie, *Missionaries in India*, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 41-42.
[114] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Coming to Christianity, Shourie continues, "Conversions have therefore been going on for 2000 years... An incredibly vast organization has been built up and incredibly huge resources are expanded to save souls. It costs '145 billion dollars to operate global Christianity', records a book on evangelization. The Church commands four *million* full time Christian workers, it runs 13000 major libraries, it publishes 22000 periodicals, it publishes four *billion* tracts a year, it operates 1800 Christian Radio and TV stations. It runs 1500 universities, and 930 research centres. It has a quarter of a *million* foreign missionaries, and over four hundred institutions to train them. And these are figures from a book published in 1989 — since then there has been the surge in Eastern Europe and Russia."[116]

India has been a major target for Christian missions since the Portuguese pirates reached its shores. Shourie quotes from the *Mission Handbook: North American Ministries Overseas* published in 1986. "Today," it says, "the most fruitful ministries are carried by more than 100,000 pastors, evangelists and preachers. Full time Indian missionaries from organized societies increased from 420 in 1973 to 2941 societies in 1983.

---

[115] *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

[116] *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14. Emphasis in source.

These missionaries have seen remarkable growth in northern India in places such as Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Sikkim. In Western India, Christian workers estimate that two new worship groups are formed every week through indigenous missionary effort. The Indian Evangelist Team has set a goal of 2,000 new churches by the year 2000. In Tamil Nadu, the Indian Church Growth Mission hopes to plant 1,000 churches in unreached villages."[117]

The missions have stopped at nothing in what one of their own theologians describes as the "game of numbers". Shourie continues, "There are volumes upon volumes that document the way the Church has spread by violence — in North and South America. The sudden jumps in the number of adherents during famines and other privations, testify to the use to which such times were put..."[118] He mentions a chapter, '*Spiritual Advantages of Famine and Cholera*', in a Catholic publication, *India and Its Missions*, brought out in 1823. The chapter carries a report from the Archbishop of Pondicherry to his superiors in Europe. This high dignitary of the Catholic Church exults, "The famine has wrought miracles. The catechumenates are filling, baptismal water flows in streams, and starving little tots fly in masses to heaven... A hospital is a readymade congregation. There is no need to go into the highways and hedges and 'compel them to come in'. They send each other."[119].

The best part of Shourie's study, however, dwells — and dwells at length — on the 'Division of Labour' between British administrators and Christian missionaries, and between the two of them and the Indologists. These three groups might have differed among themselves about the means and methods to be employed. "But in fact none of the three groups had any difference over the ultimate objectives — the conversion of the heathens to Christianity; and the extension and perpetuation of British rule... All eventually came to agree on the following:

---

[117] *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

[118] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[119] *Ibid.*, p. 16. 'Compel them to come in' is with reference to the Gospel of St. Luke 14.23 which has been used by Christian missions as a divine command to use all means including force for getting converts.

1. India is a den of ignorance, iniquity and falsehood;
2. The principal cause of this state of affairs in Hinduism;
3. Hinduism is kept going by the Brahmins;
4. As the people are in such suffering and also because Jesus in his parting words has bound us to do so, it is a duty to deliver them to Christianity;
5. For this it is that 'the walls of the mighty fortress of Brahminism' are to be 'encircled, undermined and finally stormed by the soldiers of the Cross';
6. To do so the most effective weapon will of course be the enlargement, consolidation and indefinite prolongation of British rule;
7. For the Government to exert directly to spread Christianity will ignite resentment among the natives, so, it should maintain a position of neutrality;
8. Its contribution will none the less be decisive; to take just the Government schools, their emphasis on the English language itself will open students to Christianity, their imparting modern notions of science and geography will by itself undermine and eventually finish Hinduism — for it is not a religion that can stand a 'moment's scrutiny'... Hindu notions of time, space, geography, history... are bound to be not just shown up but utterly destroyed with the first wafts of western learning;
9. The work of the missionaries will in turn help in the consolidation and perpetuation of British rule; not just the converts but all those who have been weaned on western learning and values will seek the perpetuation of that rule for their own interest;
10. The work of the scholars — of missionary scholars and scholar-missionaries will expose the roots of Brahminism and thereby uproot everything that has flowed from it.
11. In the natural course, the missionaries will be focussing

particularly on the outcastes and the tribals. Hindu society — such as it is — will be rent asunder;

12. The work of the scholars will have a similar effect... it will widen the earth-faults in Hinduism and thus prepare the way for Christianity; it will convert the fissures between the people into earth-faults and thus perpetuate British rule.

"Having been brought up on books which made British conquest of India to have been an accident, if not something which the Indians dragged the unwilling British to accomplish, I myself would have been inclined to view a listing of this kind as an *ex post* construction, as reading design into events which happened spontaneously and quite independently of one another. One look at the writings of the principal scholars, of the chief administrators and most of all at the writings and memoranda of missionaries and missionary societies is enough to dispel that presupposition."[120]

Shourie devotes several chapters to verbatism citations of strategies suggested by some leading administrators, missionaries and scholars. He concludes, "In a word, the work of the Church was not done by the missionaries alone, the religiously 'neutral' administrators did a good bit of it. Correspondingly, the work of the Empire was not done by administrators alone, the missionaries did a good bit of it. And that contribution was acknowledged by ruler after ruler." He quotes Lord Palmerston, Lord Halifax, Lord Reay and Sir Macworth Young about the missionaries being "an additional source of strength to the Empire".[121]

In a chapter, 'Creating vacuums, filling them', which carries more citations from the same sources, Shourie observes, "Several things strike one as one reads the writings and speeches of those days. First of course there is the candour: political power is what induced it — there was no reason to be circumlocutory, there was no fear that any one of consequence would take offence as no one else was of much consequence. The second thing is that in spite of the incessant frequency and explicitness with which all concerned spelled out their objectives and strategems, these are no where in our collective consciousness."[122]

---

[120] *Ibid*., pp. 58-60. I have numbered the 12 points while Shourie has marked them by squares; I have also left out some passages from some of the points which Shourie has elaborated at greater length.

[121] *Ibid*., p. 109.

That leads him to raising a very pertinent question: "I hope the reader will not just read through the examples but will also ask why it is that such material is not placed before our students. After all it is not difficult to come by, and, as the reader will agree after going through it, it has the most direct bearing on our denationalization. Yet, even though he may have considerable interest in our current problems, even though he may have been following closely the public discourse on such problems, in all probability the reader would not have come across the material. Why is this so?"[123]

His answer to the question is as follows:

> In large part no doubt because of the thoroughness with which the colonial design came to be carried out. Macaulay's design to create "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect". Sir Charles' reading his prognosis, written in 1838: "Familiarly acquainted with us by means of our literature, the Indian youth almost ceases to regard us as foreigners. They speak of our great men as we do. Educated in the same way, interested in the same objects, engaged in the same pursuits with ourselves, they become more English than Hindus..."
>
> But there is an even more potent cause for the near total erasure of such material from our public discourse and our instruction. And that is the form of "secularism" which we have practised these forty-five years: a "secularism" in which

---

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

[123] *Ibid.*, p. x.

> double-standards have been the norm, one in which everything that may remove the dross by which our national identity has been covered has become anathema.[124]

The last section of Shourie's book is mostly an analysis of the two CBCI documents which show that though adjustments in language and methods have been made after India became independent, missionary goals remain the same. The questions that were put to him at the end of his lecture at Pune remindus of the questions which Mahatma Gandhi had faced and answered. The questions were the same because the mind which had asked them has remained unchanged. But spokesman after spokesman on behalf of Christianity assured Shourie that the Church had changed and its old record should not be held against it. Shourie laid down five tests in this context:

> First, we will know the Church has truly changed when it undertakes and disseminates an honest accounting of the calumnies it heaped on India and Hinduism...
>
> The second thing to look for would be the extent to which the Church acquaints Christians in India as well as the groups it is aiming at with the results of scholarly work on two central claims of the Church — that the Bible is the revealed word of God, that it is wholly free from error, and that the Church, in particular the Pope in infallible...
>
> Similarly, developments in various sciences have caused a sea-shift in what is sustainable and what is not in regard to creation, evolution, the division between man and other forms of life, between mind and matter. The third bit of litmus would therefore be what is the extent to which the Church in India is disseminating information amongst its flock and its target groups about the consequence these developments have for its basic premises?
>
> The fourth bit of litmus would be the extent to which the Church overcomes its present tremulous anxieties regarding dialogue and the opening up to other faiths. And

---

[124] *Ibid.*, pp. x-xi.

that would happen only when what is today just a grudging acknowledgement that salvation is possible through other faiths becomes an acceptance, when the current condescension and grudging admission... give way to a wholehearted acceptance of the fact that reality is indeed multilayered, that there are many ways of perceiving it, that each must assess for himself by an inner-directed search which is liable to be the most effective for him or her at that time...

Finally, of course there is the question of conversions. In view of the fact, now proclaimed by the Church, that salvation is possible in each religion, what is the ground for converting people to Christianity, particularly by the sorts of means which we saw are in use in the North-East to this day? The litmus test of the new ecumenism would therefore be the extent to which the Church brings its traditional zeal for saving souls through conversion in line with this new acknowledgement.[125]

Missionary Response

Fr. Augustine Kanjamala, Secretary of the CBCI, who had invited Shourie for the lecture at Pune and who had been amiability itself before Shourie's indictment appeared in print, now came out in his true colours. He was in the forefront of a campaign which was launched by the Catholic scribes in various newspapers, especially in publications of the Catholic Church. Shourie was attacked personally and distorted accounts of his book were flashed. As the campaign against Shourie snowballed, Prajna Bharati, an intellectual forum with headquarters in Hyderabad, invited several senior churchmen to discuss *Missionaries in India* with Shourie on a public platform. All of them declined the invitation on one plea or the other except Kanjamala who accepted to appear on the platform provided he was given the opportunity to present a critique of

---

[125] *Ibid.*, pp. 229-30.

Shourie's book to start with. Shourie agreed and an interesting debate took place on 4 September 1994.

Arun Shourie took care of all points raised by Kanjamala, and emphasized that the change in missionary language and theological blah blah was not due to any change in missionary mentality and objectives but had been induced by the collapse of Christianity in its traditional homelands in the West.[126]

MANGAL PRABHAT LODHA'S BILL

A BJP Member of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, Mangal Prabhat Lodha, introduced Bill No. XLII of 1996 in the Nagpur session of the Assembly on 20 December 1996. It was titled 'A Bill to provide for prohibition of conversion from one religion to another by the use of force or allurement or by fraudulent means and for matters incidental thereto'. Drafted on 29 October 1996 the Bill says as follows in its STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS:

> Conversion in its very essence involves an act of undermining one's faith. The process becomes all the more objectionable when it is brought about by taking recourse to methods like allurement, force, fraud and exploitation of one's poverty. Conversion or attempt to conversion in the above manner, besides creating various maladjustments in social life, also give rise to problems of law and order and also indirectly impinge on the freedom of religion. It is, therefore, expedient to provide for measures for checking such activities.
>
> The Bill seeks to achieve the above objectives.

Clauses 1 and 2 of the Bill are devoted to definitions of various terms used in the Bill. The operative Clauses are 3 to 6 which read as under:

---

[126] Full details of the missionary response to Arun Shourie's book and the debate that followed can be read in *Arun Shourie and His Christian Critic*, Voice of India, New Delhi, 1995 and *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters (AD 304 to 1996)*, Voice of India, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 465-82.

3. No person shall convert or attempt to convert either directly or otherwise, any person from one religious faith to another by the use of force or by allurement or by any fraudulent means nor shall any person abet any such conversion.
4. Any person contravening the provisions contained in section 3 shall without prejudice to any civil liability be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to five thousand rupees or with both:
   Provided that, in case the offence is committed in respect of a minor, a woman or a person belonging to the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes the punishment shall be imprisonment to the extent of two years and fine up to ten thousand rupees.
5. (1) Whoever converts any person from one religious faith to another either by performing himself the ceremony for such conversion as a religious priest or by taking part directly or indirectly in such ceremony shall, within such period after the ceremony as may be prescribed send an intimation to the District Magistrate of the district in which the ceremony has taken place of the facts of such conversion in the prescribed form.
   (2) If any person fails without sufficient reasons to comply with the provisions contained in sub-section (1) he shall be punishable, with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees or with both.
6. An offence under this Act shall be congnizable and shall be investigated by an officer not below the rank of an Inspector of police.

Introducing the Bill in the Assembly as a Freedom of Religion Bill, Lodha said, "It is a matter of pride to introduce this Bill in the Assembly session at Nagpur which is the headquarters of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Such a Bill was passed in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh in the wake of the Niyogi Committee's Report, and later on the Supreme Court had also approved it. Religious conversion is brought about at first and, in due course, a change of nationality takes place. At the time of independence there were nearly 250 Christian families in Nagaland. Today, in the same Nagaland 85 per cent families have become Christian, and missionaries are demanding that the State be declared a Christian State... Only yesterday the newspapers in Bombay published the news that Christian missionaries have fixed a target of one lakh conversions in Maharashtra. Conversions are continuing by means of force, allurements, and use of foreign funds. Not to speak of tribal areas and remote villages, conversions are going on in prominent areas of Bombay city itself. Christian missionaries deem it their duty to convert Hindus to Christianity. The Constitution recognizes everyone's right to practice one's religion, but assault on another religion is neither a legal nor a moral right... I appeal to the Honourable Chief Minister to get this Bill passed..."

But Lodha, it seems, had counted without the power of the Catholic Church. In early January 1997 Cardinal Simon Pimenta, Bishop Thomas Dabre and Fr. Denis Pereira, Secretary Archdiocesan Board of Education (ABE) met the Chief Minister, Manohar Joshi, who assured the Catholic community not to be anxious about the introduction of the anti-conversion Bill by a BJP MLA since this Bill was a Private Bill. The Bill was never heard of again in the Maharashtra Assembly although leading newspapers in Maharashtra had come out in its support.

The finishing touch to the controversy was given by L.K. Advani, President of the BJP. In a press interview in Chennai on 4 May 1997 he declared that his party "did not believe in use of legislation" to stop conversions.

दि. जैन
4774

(This book forms the Introduction to a bulkier publication, Vindicated By Time: The Niyogi Committee Report On Christian Missionary Activities, *which carries a report of the complete Niyogi Committee Report published in 1956.)*

The Constitution of independent India adopted in January 1950 made things quite smooth for the Christian missions. They surged forward with renewed vigour. Nationalist resistance to what had been viewed as an imperialist incubus during the Struggle for Freedom from British rule, broke down when the very leaders who had frowned upon it started speaking in its favour. Voices which still remained 'recalcitrant' were sought to be silenced by being branded as those of 'Hindu communalism'. Nehruvian Secularism had stolen a march under the smokescreen of Mahatma Gandhi's *sarva-dharma-sambhāva.*

The Christian missionary orchestra in India after independence has continued to rise from one crescendo to another with the applause of the Nehruvian establishment manned by a brood of self-alienated Hindus spawned by missionary-macaulayite education. The only rift in the lute has been K.M. Panikkar's *Asia and Western Dominance* published in 1953, the *Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Committee Madhya Pradesh* published in 1956, Om Prakash Tyagi's Bill on Freedom of Religion introduced in the Lok Sabha in 1978, Arun Shourie's *Missionaries in India* published in 1994 and the Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill introduced in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly by Mangal Prabhat Lodha, M.L.A., on 20 December 1996. The two books, the Report, and the two Bills have been summarized in this book.

Rs.40 **ISBN 81-85990-54-9**

VOICE OF INDIA
New Delhi